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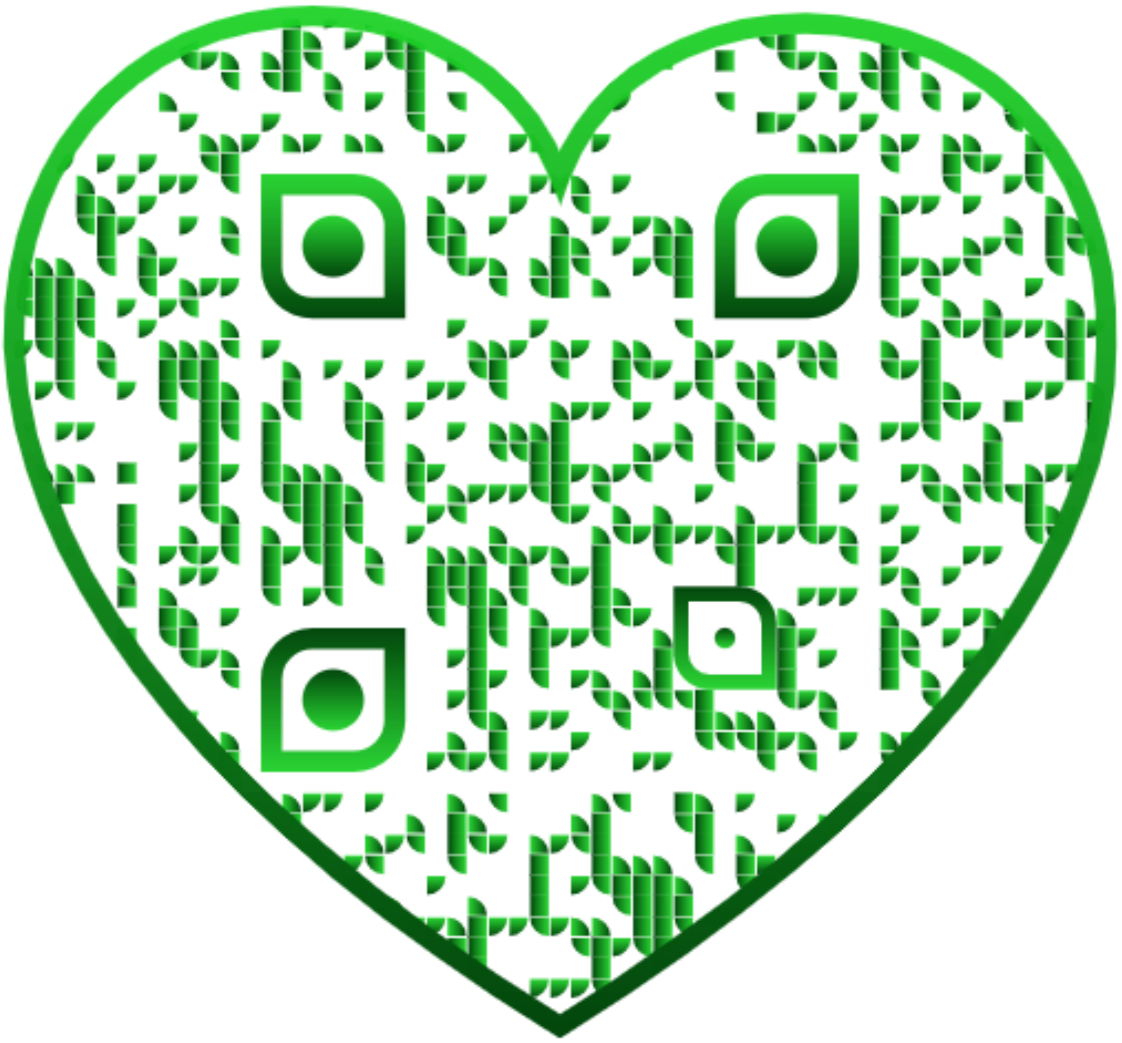

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Maurizio Pollini with conductor Christian Thielemann

Legacy of a legend

In March, we marked the passing of the great Maurizio Pollini. The composer always ranked above the performer in Pollini's hands, and his pianism has sometimes been criticised as chilly. Listening to his DG recording of Schumann's *Fantasie* – one of my most treasured albums – I hear a burning heart and strong emotions, supported by a phenomenal technique. Pollini could mould avant-garde works by Pierre Boulez and Luigi Nono with the same structural elegance he brought to a Beethoven sonata.

'This boy plays better than any of us,' said Arthur Rubinstein to fellow jury members when Pollini won the Chopin Competition in 1960. What more can I say? Where Pollini stood out was in his imaginative grasp of the possibilities to be found within the piano itself, such as the raw percussiveness of the instrument in Bartók's concertos. It is as if Pollini had a hotline to the composers' characters via their pianos, or was familiar with the very instruments on which they wrote.

Warwick Thompson discusses this idea in his 'Composers and their own Keyboards' article, starting out with the hired upright piano on which Chopin composed some of his Préludes in Majorca. He takes us on a journey from Beethoven's renovated Broadwood in Vienna, to the revolutionary Steinway which Liszt encountered towards the end of his life, to Britten's concert grand, on which Leeds Lieder festival director Joseph Middleton has played at Britten's home in Aldeburgh. Can we learn about the composer through the medium of their piano? Middleton emphatically believes so.

Where Pollini stood up for 20th-century modernists, Paul Wee has made a name for himself with lesser-known names at the end of the Romantic tradition. If his new versions of concertos by Henselt and Bronsart are anywhere near as convincing as his earlier Alkan and Thalberg albums, we're in for a treat. In the pages of *Pianist*, too, we like to give a voice to neglected composers, and this issue includes a focus on Samuil Maykapar, introduced by Michael Mills. I've fallen in love with Maykapar's *Pensée fugitive* No 6, played beautifully by Chenyin Li on this issue's *Pianist* album, and I hope you'll enjoy getting to know it too.

As we continue to listen to Pollini's recorded legacy, sifting out what we like and what we don't, we will always learn from the virtuosos of each new generation. You will have to wait a while until you can listen to cover artist Jeneba Kanneh-Mason's debut album, due for release by Sony Classical in spring 2025, but she too, believes in standing up for under-represented composers… read on.

Erica

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Exceedingly expressive

I read with interest Kathryn Page's article, 'Facial and body expressions', inside issue 137. She suggests that it's neither right nor wrong to make expressions when playing. For my part, when I go to a recital, I find it rather off-putting to watch a pianist contort their body and make exaggerated facial expressions. Even worse, some performers make humming noises. I won't mention any names, but I recently encountered the latter at a Wigmore Hall recital, and I vowed never to hear that pianist again! I believe we should try to avoid making unnecessary gestures from the earliest stages of learning. I'm a firm believer that they create tension, and therefore hinder – and certainly not help – one's playing.

Todd Bradshaw, London, UK

About time

What a relief it is to see Marc-André Hamelin on the cover [issue 137]. I have been reading your publication for over 20 years, and if I am not mistaken, he's only once appeared in that top spot. As well as being a genius pianist and composer, he has so much to say. I'd be happy to see him on the cover once a year!

Miriam Morrison, Dover, UK

NEWS

The heat is on

Summer learning at PIANO WEEK

PIANO WEEK returns to its favourite UK venues this summer – Dulwich College (15-20 July) and Rugby School (21-28 July; 28 July-4 August) – with concert artists and leading pedagogues guiding participants of all ages and abilities through the world of piano playing. The organisation has opened up a few more spots in its residencies this summer, so if you'd like to join, a week of fun and lots of piano playing awaits you – whether you opt for the Lite, Standard or Intensive programme.

Rugby School's music department is impressive, with faculty members including Caroline Oltmanns, Grace Yeo, Maria Marchant and John Turville (jazz). There are lots of practice rooms at PIANO WEEK's disposal, plenty of Steinway grand pianos and three concert halls to utilise. When not practising hard, participants can enjoy a quirky local pub, some good coffee chops and restaurants in town, and there are often some enjoyable summer events a stone's throw away from the school. The Memorial Chapel, dating back to 1856, is one of the concert halls on site, with stained-glass windows and a Steinway model B within its stunning nave. Another concert venue is the Temple Speech Room (pictured), opened by King Edward VII in 1909 and housing a Steinway Model D for recitals. Accommodation is on site in single rooms (with shared bathrooms) and tasty meals are served three times a day in the school's dining room.

PIANO WEEK's non-residential week is at Dulwich College, London, this summer. Opened over 400 years ago by Edward Alleyn, it is a good example of a majestic British institution. The Renaissance-style 'Old library' hosts the week's concerts and once again everyone is treated to a good music department, with plenty of teaching and practice rooms. Dulwich Village, a bijou area with coffee shops (and great pastries, we are told), a good pub (with accommodation above) and various other shops is a ten-minute walk away. Dulwich Picture Gallery, with its permanent collection of Baroque paintings, is also very close to the College, where 'PIANO WEEKers' can seek some visual inspiration in-between lessons. During the week, lunch and dinner is served on site and London is only 12 minutes away by train, from the nearby West Dulwich station.

Since its inception, PIANO WEEK has welcomed world-renowned pianists Professor Leslie Howard and Stephen Kovacevich among its guest artists, who have given masterclasses and performances throughout the week. As a participant, one can expect to make new friendships, and to be surrounded by kind, supportive people, both amongst fellow participants and faculty too. Aside from piano lessons, the course offers an assortment of classes in other subjects, too, including how to memorise, how to practise, handling stage fright, playing jazz, and classes on theory. There are also plenty of opportunities to perform both as soloist and as part of a duo.

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RAISING THE BAR

Paul Wee talks to **Erica Worth** about the sense of perspective that comes from pursuing a career in law while playing hyper-virtuoso concertos

Paul Wee is sitting behind the desk of his London office: impeccably turned out, as one would expect of a London barrister working in commercial law. It's a Friday, but there's no 'end-of the-week' wind-down for him: he is up against the clock, preparing for an injunction hearing in court to take place next week. So we meet remotely, on a video call.

When *Pianist* last caught up with Wee at the end of 2020, the BIS label was shortly to release his second album, *L'art du chant* by Sigismond Thalberg. His name had spread rapidly among pianophiles during the previous couple of years. Here was a barrister with a BIS contract and a fast-growing reputation for hyper-virtuoso repertoire, and in particular for the music of Charles-Valentin Alkan.

After *L'art du chant*, BIS released a third album in autumn 2022, on which Wee approached the 19th-century virtuoso tradition from a different angle, playing Alkan's solo transcription of Mozart's D minor Concerto and Liszt's transcription of Beethoven's *Eroica*. According to one reviewer, 'This Eroica may be the freshest, most spirited new Beethoven recording I've heard in a while.'

Crossing the bridge

The Mozart-Alkan recording has become a stepping-stone for his fourth album, his debut on record with an orchestra, in concertos by Adolf von Henselt and Hans von Bronsart. Another milestone is reached on 15 June when he gives his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall, giving a rare live performance of the demanding Concerto for Solo Piano by Alkan. Does he still think that he's regarded as a one-off or a novelty, 'the barrister who plays Alkan'?

'I think that it's changing,' he says. 'When I spoke with Peter Quantrill in 2020, part of me knew that one of the only reasons why anyone was interested in me was the novelty factor. "Here's a barrister playing different piano music." I didn't mind it at the time. But once I'd crossed the bridge with my third recording, I felt that people were now realising this is not just a gimmick. I am starting to feel that people are really listening to me and accepting me as a real musician.'

Wee explains how his professional career affords him a measure of freedom in how he picks and chooses his repertoire. 'Firstly, you must know that in my piano activities, I am 95 per cent a music lover,' he says. 'I am much more on the audience side of things. What that means is that when I am asked, "What would you like to record next?" I'm not thinking in terms of what would advance my career as a pianist. I have a chance to record the works that I love. I don't have to sell out the Barbican like some others

© Benjamin Ealovega

do. I can put out these works to let listeners know about them. That explains the temptation for me to record lesser-known repertoire.'

Henselt's showstopper Concerto had a kind of rarity value among pianists and pianophiles before Marc-André Hamelin brought it to wider attention with a recording in the Hyperion series dedicated to 'The Romantic Piano Concerto'. From a later generation, the Bronsart Concerto awaits a champion who will carry the work to an audience. According to Wee, 'the Henselt Concerto is one of the incredible monuments that all of us pianists adore, and we wish we could play it more. The Bronsart is very heart on sleeve, mid- to late-19th century, where you need to breathe, to carry the musicians with you and so on.'

His partners on the project were the Swedish Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Michael Collins. 'I had to prepare myself for the fact that I might not be able to achieve what I wanted to with these pieces, what with the time available and so on. But when I got there, I felt totally free. Mike Collins is the most wonderful musician: he knew what I wanted immediately. He and the orchestra were going to stick to me like glue. It was so liberating.'

From stalls to stage

As a music-lover first and foremost, Wee can often be found in the stalls at the Wigmore Hall, attending song and piano recitals. The experience of appearing on its celebrated stage must surely feel like a dream come true. 'It is the sort of thing I would have hoped for when I was a teenager studying with Nina Svetlanova at Manhattan School of Music,' he replies.' It's the last thing in the world that I thought would happen once I decided to pursue law!'

The piano inevitably took a back seat. 'I was comfortable with the knowledge that I will always love and play the piano,' he says. 'I got more satisfaction from approaching things in an amateur way, with chamber music groups (especially before Covid), where I played with barristers, doctors, judges, a district judge… all keen amateur music-lovers. We'd get together and say to ourselves, "Let's do a Schumann piano quartet." Of course, this wasn't the type of music-making you'd see at the Wigmore, but it didn't matter. It didn't affect the joy.

'And that's why now, having come to peace with all of that, it's very surreal. Making recordings and appearing at the Wigmore Hall is a dream come true, but because of the satisfaction I have found in music making in the more relaxed sphere, it's not like I'm reverting back to how I was as a teenager. If this goes well, or I get invited back to the Wigmore, that's great. They will be nice added bonuses.'

> 'The nerves I get are the same as I get in my day job. When you've been working on a case, to cross-examine a witness, it's that same feeling of anticipation. You've done the prep, now's the time for a performance'

This level-headed approach must serve him well in the court room: is he as calm on stage in front of an audience? 'I get nervous, yes,' he admits. 'Everyone does. I am not sure how I compare to others, though. The nerves I get are the same as I get in my day job. When you've been working on a case, preparing to cross-examine a witness, it's that same feeling of anticipation. You've done the prep, now's the time for a performance.'

To reach that standard, while fulfilling the demands of a high-pressure full-time job, how does he find enough time to practise? 'If it's for something definite in the diary – such as a recording session or this Wigmore Hall concert – I will try to practise more regularly. If I am lucky, I might sit down at the piano three or four times a week.'

Did I hear that right? Surely he has to practise more than that? 'No, I don't,' says Wee, 'but that's not to say that I am not thinking about it, mentally working away in the background. If I don't have anything specific coming up, I will play whenever I feel like it. Probably not more than once a week. At the weekend, I might have a couple of hours at the piano, but I like to spend time with my daughters and my wife!'

Laws of music

It's a story to give the rest of us hope, as we carve out half an hour here and there to sit down at the piano. Does Wee have advice for those who want to take their playing to the next level? 'I would suggest to put yourself out there and find other musicians to play with. The joy of making music with other people is just so amazing. It brings you back to the focus of enjoying the music. It's not about a certain run that you can never play. Of course, it's easier for me to find like-minded piano lovers in a city like London. I am always struck by the sheer number of lawyers at the Bar who are the most determined and knowledgeable music-lovers. When I was a teenager, I had the impression that the only real lovers of music in this world were those that were doing it. That's absolutely not the case!'

Even so, Wee still takes pleasure in and solace from time spent at the piano. 'The amazing thing about the piano is that when you sit down it engages your body, it engages your mind… it's the most amazing escape from the chaos of everyday life. I have moments when I am on a difficult case and stressed out, and I say "Let's sit down at the piano and clear my mind." It's at those moments that I am most glad that I don't do it as a career. There's nothing everyday about it. I don't get to play every day at all. It's something I go to because I want to go to it.' ■

Paul Wee plays the concertos by Henselt and Bronsart with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Michael Collins on BIS Records (BIS-2715, released 31 May). He makes his debut recital at Wigmore Hall, London, on 15 June at 1pm.

Johanna Berghorn © Sony Music Entertainment

SERIOUSLY SPEAKING

Blessed with an admirably grounded demeanour, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason talks to **Jessica Duchen** about her new recording contract with Sony Classical, her love of Rachmaninov's Second Concerto and the sibling dynamics in a family with seven ultra-talented children

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, the fifth of the celebrated seven musical siblings, was in her first term studying piano at the Royal College of Music [RCM] when a Covid lockdown struck in 2020. She found herself confined to her hall of residence bedsit with only an electric keyboard for company. Perhaps it was a blessing in disguise.

'I had just started at the RCM when I got an email from Chi-chi Nwanoku asking if I could play the Florence Price Concerto with the Chineke! Orchestra in a month's time,' Jeneba says. 'A few days later someone in my halls got Covid, so I had to self-isolate in my room for two weeks, which was a bit of a nightmare.' She was, however, able to spend the time committing this rare and special concerto to memory. A month later she was ready to perform it.

The concert took place at the Royal Festival Hall, if for an online audience. It was Jeneba's debut at the venue, aged 18, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and later released as a recording in Chineke!'s award-winning boxed set of the American composer's long-neglected music. Pandemic aside, the latest Kanneh-Mason to head for the stars was on her way. 'Price could have no more persuasive an advocate', said *The Guardian*'s review.

'I'm glad I decided to take up the challenge of learning it so quickly, because then I played it in the Proms the year after,' Jeneba recounts. 'That was a huge opportunity. And then I went on a tour with the Chineke! Orchestra in Europe with the concerto and I'm playing it in lots of different places this year and next. I love the piece, so it's been a great journey.'

She still seems almost disbelieving about that Prom. 'I was very, very nervous. I remember my family saying I looked relaxed, but internally I felt all the pressure. But I loved it as well. The Albert Hall is unlike any other venue I've played in. It feels even bigger when you're on the stage – and you can't really see any of the audience, because all the lights are on us.'

Going places

Today, while everyone is trying to forget about the Covid era fast, Jeneba has taken another step up. She has just been signed to a recording contract with Sony Classical and her first solo album is in the pipeline. 'It's such an incredible feeling. I'm really excited,' she says. 'When they approached me, I got on well with the people on the team, I felt that I trusted everyone and it felt like something that was going to grow. I was able to say what I wanted to do as well as listen to the great ideas that they had for me. I just had an instinct that it would be the right choice.'

> 'I think music is such an incredible thing. Everyone should know that and see the benefits that it has in schools and on younger people'

The album, planned for release in spring 2025, is a mixed programme bookended by two hefty undertakings: the Chopin B flat minor Sonata ('Funeral March') and Scriabin's Sonata No 2. In between, Jeneba plays two Chopin nocturnes, Florence Price's *Fantasie Nègre* No 1, the second movement, 'Summerland', from William Grant Still's *Three Visions*, Margaret Bonds' *Troubled Water*, two Debussy préludes and two by Scriabin.

'It's a big programme,' she acknowledges. 'I think it's more a recital of pieces that really speak to me, rather than having a specific theme running throughout. But for the album to start with the Chopin Sonata and end with the Scriabin – those are two sonatas that I really love. Having the nocturnes next to the Chopin Sonata and the préludes next to the Scriabin, you can see the smaller works of these composers as well.'

The Chopin Sonata No 2 could seem a particularly tall order for a youthful pianist – Jeneba is all of 21 and still studying at the RCM – but she is taking its considerable challenges in her stride: 'There's so much detail in it. I

JENEBA KANNEH-MASON ON... GROWING UP WITH THE KANNEH-MASONS

Growing up in a houseful of musicians brought its challenges, not least because we all needed to practise. There were three pianists and we had enough pianos to practise at the same time, but they were in adjacent rooms, so we could hear each other. That was probably quite good, however, because we learned to try and focus in on our own sound and not be distracted easily. And everyone else was practising in bedrooms and bathrooms.

I'm number five in the family and I think it's a good position, because I have enough responsibility – I have two younger sisters that I've got to look after – and then I have so many older siblings to ask questions, especially Isata who's a travelling pianist and gives me so much advice. And the piano is the one thing we don't compete on!

The sheer quantity of music for the instrument helps: we don't really have a clash, because there's so much repertoire. There was one time last year when I wanted to learn the Chopin Sonata No 3, but Isata was already playing it, so I learned No 2 instead. But that's the only time it's happened – and even if we did play the same repertoire, I don't think it would be a problem.

We were brought up to always support each other. I remember when Sheku won the BBC Young Musician, we were all there and it was probably one of the best days of my life!

Although we are now living our separate lives, we are still close. We don't all live together, but I go over to Sheku's house all the time and we play together, we talk about music, we talk about other things as well and we go to each other's concerts. There's always something to do and there's always someone to speak to. And, yeah, that's what's amazing about it.

For a full account of life with the Kanneh-Masons, see Kadie Kanneh-Mason's award-winning book, House of Music.

love practising it, because every single time I go back to it, there's always something else to discover in the voicing and the different lines.'

In programming the Bonds, Grant Still and Price, Jeneba is continuing the pattern that her older siblings have begun of championing composers of colour. 'I'm very excited to play Margaret Bonds' music because she studied with Florence Price and was incredibly gifted at the piano. William Grant Still is a beautiful composer as well and I find his music very visual. When I listen to music, I often come up with different images and stories in my head, so that's why I really connected with this.' As for Price, some of whose manuscripts were discovered in a derelict house about 15 years ago, 'It's so exciting now that I get to play some of her music – it is wonderfully passionate.'

Growing up with music

The Kanneh-Mason family needs little introduction. The seven children have been growing up in a rambly house in Nottingham; their parents are Stuart, a travel company executive, and Kadie, who was formerly a university lecturer in English literature. When it turned out that they all had musical inclinations, it was the start of years of seriously hard slog. The eldest, pianist Isata, followed by violinist Braimah and cellist Sheku, would get up at 5am every Saturday to travel to London for lessons at the Royal Academy of Music's junior department. Soon Jeneba was doing likewise. Along the way, in 2015 the six eldest (the youngest, cellist Mariatu, was too young) competed in Britain's Got Talent, where Simon Cowell called them 'the world's most talented family'.

Jeneba isn't sure exactly what first made her want to play the piano. 'I don't remember starting. But what my mum said is that I used to play a minor scale on repeat all the time. For some reason, I was really drawn to it. And I used to listen to the Rachmaninov Second Piano Concerto in the music room. When I was two years old, I'd always go in and fall asleep listening to that.'

> 'When I was two years old, I'd go into the music room and fall asleep listening to Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto'

She went to a local Catholic day school, rather than a specialist music school, and found it supportive. 'They were very lenient about our extracurricular activities. I was in loads of school bands. I was in their klezmer band, I was in their chamber orchestra because I played the cello as well, and I was always part of school concerts. Because of that, I was never seen as doing something 'different'.'

At the Junior Academy, her teacher was Patsy Toh, who also taught Isata. 'She's amazing,' Jeneba says. 'She's set me up so well for where I am now. She always talked so much about the music and about what I wanted to say. She really made me think about what it was that I was doing at the piano, so that I would play with more intention.'

© Jake Turney (p12); Johanna Berghorn © Sony Music Entertainment (p13)

Exploring the repertoire

Now, at the RCM, she holds the Victoria Robey Scholarship and is studying with Vanessa Latarche, Head of Keyboard. 'I thought that she would be someone who would push me to my limits of musicality and technique. Also, I wanted to do something different to my siblings. I felt that I'd been at the Academy for a long time and I liked the atmosphere at the College. The piano department is amazing and there are loads of opportunities, so it felt like the right thing to do.' She is full of enthusiasm for Latarche's teaching: 'It's very detailed. We talk a lot about character and articulation, and I'm never allowed to play passively. She's teaching me to play with a lot more passion as well!'

Jeneba has been hoovering up the accolades. She was a category finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France 2014, and the Nottingham Young Musician 2013. Is she tempted by the prospect of entering international competitions such as Leeds or the Van Cliburn? 'Maybe after I've graduated!'

More immediately, she is working on her favourite concerto – Rachmaninov's Second – for a tour later this year with the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Rachmaninov, to coin a phrase, had big hands – but so does Jeneba, who can stretch a tenth easily and has the kind of long, slender fingers that suit the filigree music of the Russian giant extremely well.

For the future, Jeneba says she would love to explore more music by Fanny Mendelssohn. 'My sister Isata has just been featured in a film about her [Sheila Hayman's *Fanny: The Other Mendelssohn*]. After watching that and hearing some of her music, I was blown away by the fact that I hadn't heard any of this before. It's made me really excited about what else was out there.'

Things that matter

If her teachers are role models, so are her family members. 'The black women in my life have really inspired me – most of all my mum and my sisters. But other musicians like Beyoncé have too, and Florence Price is someone I really love.' The example of Chineke!, Europe's first chiefly global-majority orchestra, is important to her and when learning the cello, she played in its junior orchestra. 'Technically, Chineke! hasn't been around for that long, and I think that it's important to keep pushing for equality and for diversity. Even though things are changing, and we're starting to look at composers and performers as well from underrepresented backgrounds, I think it's always something that we have actively to try and change. Otherwise it's easy to slip back into how things were before.'

The current condition of classical music in Britain still leaves much to be desired. 'I think it's frustrating, because as musicians, we don't want to keep having to prove to people why music matters and why there should be funding for the arts. I think music is such an incredible thing, and everyone should know that and see the benefits that it has in schools and on younger people. It would be so great for the UK in general to celebrate the arts: it's good for *everything*. And it shouldn't be the musicians' job to have to keep saying why we should be seen as important.'

For would-be young musicians contemplating following in her footsteps (or fingerprints), she has some wise words. 'You have to be prepared that it takes a lot of work. But also, you have always to love it. And remember the reason why you started, because there will be moments where it is really difficult. If you know the reason you're doing it, then that will keep you going. Also, be interested in the industry, and learn as much as possible about your peers, the people who are performing now, and other composers. Be open to everything.' ■

If you could play only one piece from now on, what would it be?
Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 2.

If you could play only one composer from now on, who would it be?
Rachmaninov.

One pianist you would travel long and far to hear?
Yuja Wang.

One concert hall you'd like to play in?
I love playing in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Any technical issues?
I'd like my octaves to be faster.

What advice would you give to an amateur pianist about how to improve?
Play your scales every day – it's a very good foundation. Then play pieces that you really love.

If you weren't a pianist, what would you be?
A middle-distance runner.

One person you would love to play for?
Arthur Rubinstein.

A composer you're not quite ready for?
Schoenberg.

What other kinds of music do you enjoy listening to?
I love Lauryn Hill, Little Simz and Beyoncé.

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason's debut album on the Sony Classical label is released in spring 2025. Jeneba appears in recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, on 26 September. Further details can be found at www.kannehmasons.com.

NOTHING VENTURED
BREAKING OUT FROM YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Need to give your playing a new lease of life? Then try the repertoire you've always kept at arm's length, says **Mark Tanner**

We all relish finding that sweet spot in our learning – the perfect balance between feeling settled and challenged. And it goes without saying that, as we improve and age, this balance will likely alter. While some of us like to live life on the edge in pursuit of an ever-more comprehensive technique and repertoire, others prefer a calmer, less pressured environment in which to develop. At any level there's always mileage in consolidating one's playing in between more intense periods of learning. There may be stages in our lives when we feel extra adventurous – others when we cherish a slower pace and simply want to play music we know and love. For some, gearing up for some kind of event, such as an exam or concert, presents the best motivation to practise – but we're all different, and enjoyment is surely as worthy an ambition as any. In this article I'll be assuming you're up for trying something new! This needn't be anything earth-shattering, but there could be something here that will breathe life into your playing.

Go for the unfamiliar

Why bother learning a piece that's in a style I've never tried before? Aren't the options plentiful enough within the styles I'm already familiar playing? The short answer is that we might open up a whole new world for ourselves. We may have settled into, say, predominantly Baroque or Classical repertoire almost by default, possibly because we fondly recall a family member playing it years ago, or for more practical reasons, for example we have smaller hands – or own a beautiful square piano! But our preferences or prejudices may be harder to pin down – perhaps we've long harboured a suspicion about jazz, or doubt whether we'd have the stretch needed to play Rachmaninov.

Whatever the reasons for our choices, we could potentially be missing out! A great place to play Pianists' Lucky Dip is this very issue of *Pianist*. It's fine to eliminate styles (or the repertoire of a particular composer) once you've given the music a solid attempt – perhaps seek out several examples that appear a notch or two easier than you think you'd be capable of tackling, so that you're not having to spend too much time unpicking initial complexities. Setting foot in a less familiar soundworld can be a little daunting at first – you may feel unsure what role the pedals will play, or whether you'll be able to get your fingers around those awkward looking chords, leaps or accompaniments. But keeping an open mind is how important new discoveries are made. You may find that your fingers seem to enjoy a particular piece more than your ears (!), or vice versa, in which case spending a little extra time with it might just tip the balance.

Key sera sera

Playing familiar music in an alien key can be surprisingly fun and enlightening. Choose a short passage in a piece that isn't overly riddled with accidentals or thick chords – preferably something in a major key you can play while hardly thinking about it, that starts and finishes on the tonic. First, try out one or two of the easier transposition possibilities, for example from E flat major to E major, where you can read the pitches exactly as they appear on the page, but with a newly imagined key of four sharps – up one semitone from the three flats in the original key. Transposing down from C sharp major to C major is arguably even easier; similarly, you could go down from

5 TOP TIPS: Unfamiliar territory

1. Try learning something in a less familiar style or key – you might love it!
2. Transpose part of a piece you know well into an adjacent key – it'll bring you strangely closer to the melody and harmonies.
3. Busk a piece using a recording to widen your aural awareness and improvisation skills.
4. Learn something that is atonal, uses irregular time-signatures or less conventional rhythms.
5. Keep an open mind: piano clubs and summer schools can prove reinvigorating.

F sharp major to F major (and vice versa). Savour the new sound and *feel* of what you are experiencing – it's a great way of adding to your understanding of harmony.

A stitch in time

Music built from irregular time signatures can initially seem like a musical IQ test. So before getting bogged down with learning a piece that's in 7/8, I'd suggest spending a moment simply tapping out quavers in accented groups of 2+2+3, or else verbalising them: 'ta-da ta-da ta-da-da'. From here, in the key the particular piece happens to be in, play an ascending scale from the first to the seventh notes inclusive, again accenting as 2+2+3, so in C major you'd go from C up to B; then come back down the scale again, this time launching from the high C and landing on the lower D, ready to do the same up-down loop again. This simple exercise allows you to explore playing with a 7/8 'feel' while playing notes and finger patterns you're familiar with. Now learn the piece!

Play it by ear

Busking a tune/chord sequence purely by ear may not be something you've ever contemplated doing, but it can be an invigorating, eye-opening experience. You might discover you're rather good at it. Find a recording of a piece that contains a memorable tune (whether known to you or not), and learn to play a whole phrase of it by rote, i.e. locate the notes purely by ear and by feel; replay and pause the recording as many times as you need. You can of course correct errors as you encounter them, but it's often more rewarding to linger at a trickier interval and mentally hear the scale steps that lie in between the two notes. When attempting to include the harmonies the process will probably feel more complicated to begin with, so assemble a basic 'library' of triads that your LH can quickly find. In the key of G major, a typical melody will likely make use of the following chords: G major, A major, C major, D major and E minor. These chords will be simple approximations at first, but if you find this easy, stretch yourself with more elaborate chords, different keys, or music which uses more involved sequences and modulations.

Other avenues

You could break through your comfort zone by trying music that is more dissonant than you've been used to. Often, a reluctance to engage with dissonance comes from an understandable fear of how the notes are notated on the page. But once your eyes and ears have begun to embrace the leap from tonal to atonal music, your fingers will begin to respond to these less familiar clusters or patterns of notes – the process is strangely satisfying! Why not learn a short piece that's entirely atonal? Grade 8 players should seek out Schoenberg's Suite Op 19, which is a super-clever, pocket-sized collection of pieces that you could add to your repertoire surprisingly quickly.

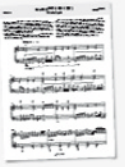
Attempting to memorise a piece (or just a section of it – perhaps to ease page-turns) for the first time should also respond to calm, patient practice. A little extra confidence in memorising often repays the player by encouraging more focused listening while permitting the eyes to guide the hands through troubled waters. In a different vein, committing to performing something live, or on video for family and friends, could be just the nudge you need to free yourself from a feeling of stagnation in your piano playing, as could joining a piano club or signing up for a summer school. Finding a piano buddy to play duets with could be the best thing you do all year [there's even a duet inside this issue], as might learning a piece that uses the middle pedal, focuses on the LH, or emphasises the extremes of register.

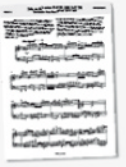
Enjoy playing the styles and composers you already feel comfortable with, but keep an eye and ear open for new possibilities as you trawl randomly through the resources you have at hand. A few weeks spent playing Bach will likely pay dividends when it comes to learning something by Shostakovich, just as indulging in a piece by Satie might trigger an unanticipated passion for Einaudi (or vice versa). An adult pupil of mine once proudly declared 'I can't *stand* Mozart', to which I responded 'A pity – Mozart would have *loved* your phrasing'. An open mind is an open universe. ■

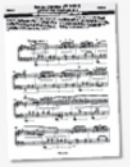
www.marktanner.info

> You may find that your fingers seem to enjoy a particular piece more than your ears (!), or vice versa

Brave is beautiful

Mark Tanner's advice for tackling the unknown in three of this issue's scores

Mel Bonis Prélude Op 10: This luscious 'tenor' melody will give your LH a welcome workout, and may well be the first piece you've learned by this prolific 19th-century French female composer. You could also experiment with learning the opening eight bars of the tune by rote from listening to a recording.



Bach Sarabande from Partita No 2: A great introduction to Bach for the intermediate player. Alternatively, if you already know this splendid Sarabande, why not try memorising the opening eight-bar phrase, or transposing the RH line up a tone into D minor?

Chopin Waltz Op 64 No 2: C sharp minor might be less familiar to you – but don't be daunted by the double sharps that punctuate the piece. Get to grips with the LH accompaniment straight away, changing the pedal at each bar, and before long you'll be adding in the sumptuous RH. Be flexible – create as much expressive shaping as you can.

BREAKING IT DOWN TO BUILD IT UP: THE THREE S'S

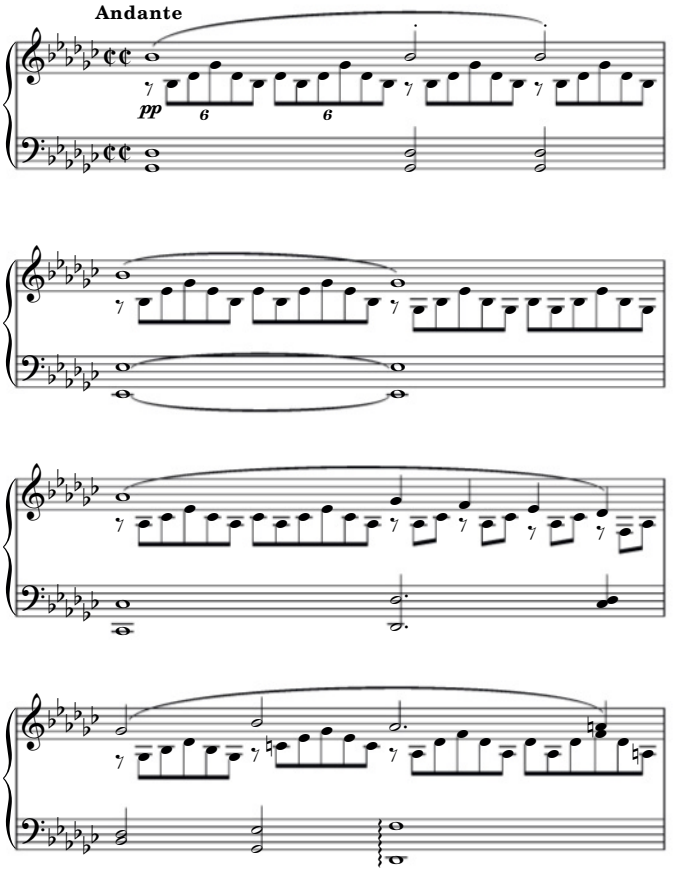
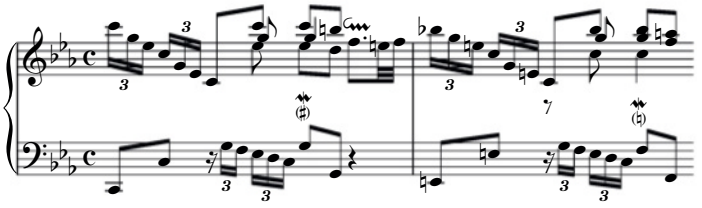
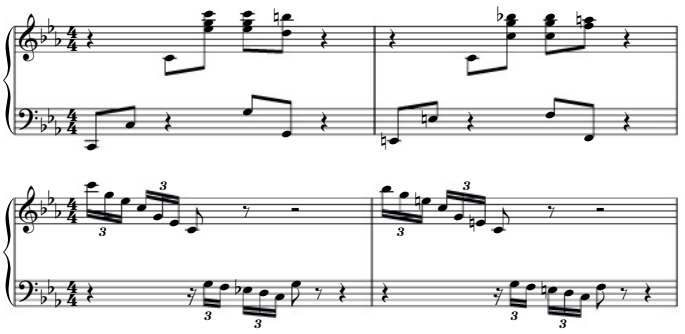
Delve into **Graham Fitch**'s toolbox to unearth his most precious items that will help get your pieces up to performance standard in no time – fermatas and all

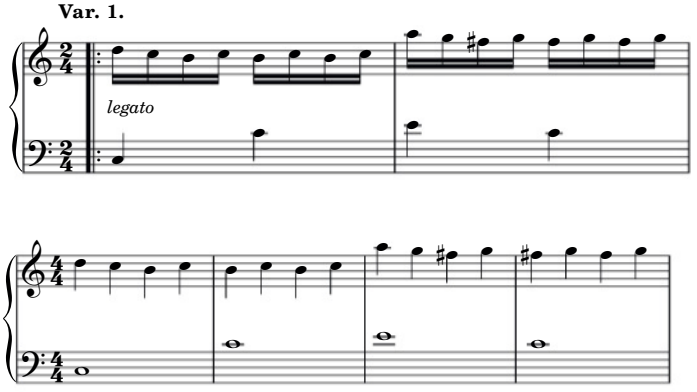
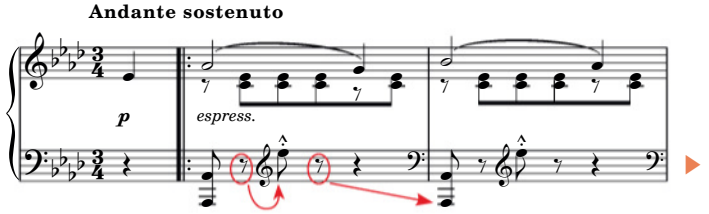
A mañana attitude to learning a piece properly may give us some instant pleasure, but it creates the weakest of foundations, especially if we have any aspirations to perform it at any point in the future. If we allow ourselves repeated read-throughs, guessing at those passages we have not had the patience to work out thoroughly, or glossing over spots where our random fingering is clearly not working, we can expect a shoddy result, no matter how much time we put in later. The concept I call *The Three S's* (separately, slowly, sections) comes from the phrase coined by British MP Sir William Curtis, *The Three R's* (reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic), in reference to the foundations of education in Victorian era schools. Similarly, *The Three S's* are the basic components of the toolbox we use during our practising, whatever our level as pianists.

> It is human nature, especially for the young player, to play pieces through rather than summon the effort to practise – to spend rather than to invest

Separately

Strategic use of separate-hand practice can be helpful in breaking down the material we are faced with when learning a new piece so we can focus on every note. Playing the LH alone is excellent for deep learning, as it is often the hand we don't actively listen to. Separate-hand practice is most useful when combined with hands-together practice, in alternation.

'Separately' does not only mean 'hands', but also 'strands'. Schubert's G flat Impromptu (top of next column) presents us with a typical three-part texture: melody, bass line, and a harmonic middle ground. There is great value in practising the top melody and bass (minus the accompaniment), as well as the bass and accompaniment (minus the melody) to hear clearly and to help balance our sound. If we really want to deepen our practice, try singing the melody line instead of playing it. This is a true test of how well we know its expressive possibilities!

Zig-zag practice is excellent for concentration, coordination, and for forcing the eye back onto the page if you find it has been wandering. Play a section with one hand, then continue with the other – without missing a beat. Bach's Fantasia in C minor provides a clear example, but it can be applied to many pieces.

Slowly

It is human nature, especially for the younger player, to play pieces through rather than summon the effort to practise – to spend rather than to invest. Slow practising is not just for beginners, nor is it only for learning notes in the early stages of practising a piece. We use slow practice to finesse our sound (it enables us to exaggerate the dynamics, phrase shapings, tonal balances, etc), and to maintain a piece we already know. The great pianist Rachmaninov practised seasoned pieces in his active repertoire so slowly that colleagues could not always recognise the piece. How slow is slow? The greater the magnification when looking through a microscope, the finer detail you will see. Ultra-slow practice helps us see, hear, and feel the atoms and molecules of the music. To develop evenness and control, we might practise Variation 1 from Mozart's 'Twinkle, Twinkle' Variations at half, or even one quarter, the speed. Be as precise as possible about all details: fingering, responding to the key beds, key releases, quality of sound, etc.). Insist on absolute precision of notes, fingering and rhythm.

Slowing the tempo right down to a snail's pace in the early stages of learning Burgmüller's *La cloche des matines* (from the Op 109 set) enables us to concentrate on forming the reflexes for fast and direct motions in the LH. Aim to move to the surface of the next key(s) immediately you release each LH note or octave (the tempo is slow, the motions fast). After a while, the motions will be automatic, requiring no thought.

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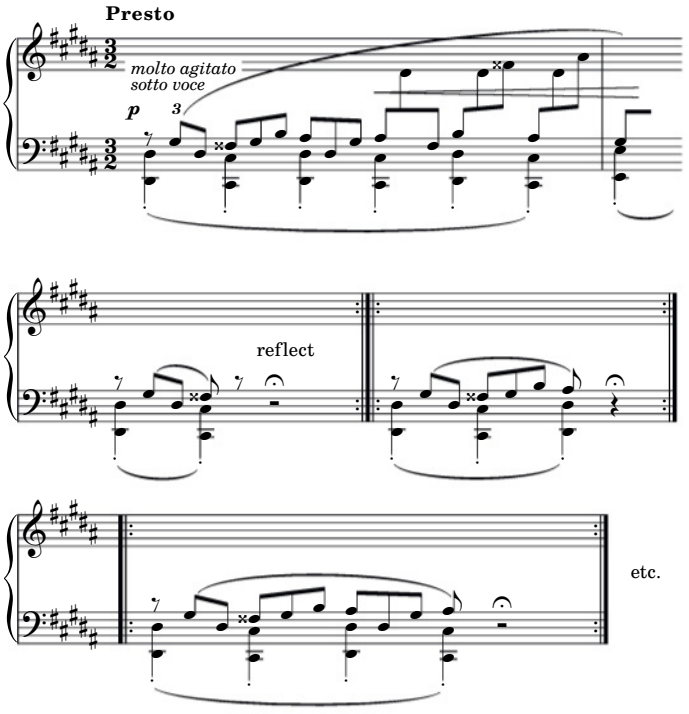
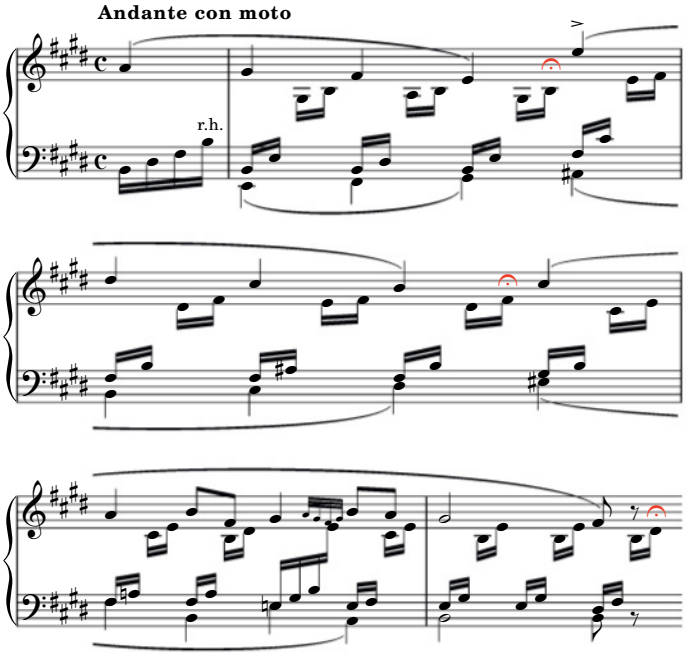
Sections

From an undercoat of slow practice, we proceed to develop reflexes for speed, not necessarily by cranking up the metronome with each repetition (a somewhat laborious, mind-numbing process), but by playing short bursts at full speed. Pause after each soundbite to evaluate what improvements or adjustments you need to make before you repeat the spot, and you will make progress. Perhaps you sensed some tension in the arm, or noticed your rhythm wasn't quite even? Aim not to repeat the spot too soon, wait until you have a clear goal in mind for what you want to hear and feel. Then, once you are happy with your result, either add a note or a group of notes to the section or begin a new section from where you left off.

Zig-zag practice is excellent for concentration, coordination, and for forcing the eye back onto the page if you find it has been wandering

This chaining technique takes concentration and needs to be done a few times over the course of some days before the effects will truly be felt. When you are at this stage of your practice, recognise that you will not yet be fully in control of the tempo, and it will feel comforting to end such a practice session by going over it slowly. However, we avoid slow practice for a while, until we have formed the reflexes for fast playing. Thereafter, we can use slow practice occasionally. Here is how the process might look at the start of the second movement from Scriabin's Sonata-Fantasy No 2:



Our working memory has a relatively small capacity. When we practise in small sections we can focus on that section and learn it more efficiently. One way of maximising our practice is to include planned pauses (rather than accidental stops and stumbles), at the end of each bar, or phrase, or wherever feels natural. Because we move these stopping places around each time we practise like this, I call this process The Floating Fermata. Here are possible chunks for Mendelssohn's *Song without Words* Op 19 No 1. Stay on the fermata as long as you need to prepare and mentally rehearse the next chunk. You may want to use the fermata to consciously release tension, or to reflect on the chunk you have just played. Was the playing fluent, rhythmical, expressive? How about the fingering? If you feel you could improve on what you just did, specify in as much detail what you expect from yourself when you repeat the chunk. Be as kind and encouraging to yourself as you are honest, and you can expect tangible improvements after a while.

If you are feeling bored in your practice, frustrated that you don't seem to be making any progress, or you notice that you don't really know what to do when you sit down at the piano, it might have nothing to do with your level of ability as a pianist, rather a lack of know-how in your practice. Try some of these ideas out and be prepared to feel inspired and motivated again! ■

For Graham's free email course on how to learn a new piece, follow this link: https://bit.ly/threess

@ GET IN TOUCH

Graham Fitch would like to hear from readers who have piano-playing questions, whether about a certain technique or a passage in a piece of music. Please write to the editor at editor@pianistmagazine.com. Due to the large number of requests, Graham may not be able to answer every question that is submitted.

THE SCORES

Pianist 138 • Read the **lessons** • Play the **scores**

LESSONS FROM THE **EXPERTS**

MELANIE SPANSWICK is a pianist, writer, teacher and composer. She has published over 25 books including the best-selling three-book piano course, *Play It Again: PIANO* (Schott), as well as the more recent series, *Women Composers – A Graded Anthology For Piano* (Schott), which won the 2022 Presto Music Award for 'Best New Series of the Year'. Melanie teaches the piano at Junior Guildhall School of Music & Drama and Eton College.
Read Melanie Spanswick's lesson

NILS FRANKE is Dean of Higher Education at the University Centre Colchester, UK, having previously held posts at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and the University of Reading. He has recorded for Warner and Brilliant Classics. Nils specialises in historical performance pedagogy, with a particular focus on 19th-century pianist-composers. His editions are published by Wiener Urtext and Schott Music International.
Read Nils Franke's lesson

GARETH OWEN is Head of Piano at Eton College and teaches at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He has performed as both soloist and chamber musician throughout the UK and internationally, including recitals at Wigmore Hall and St John's, Smith Square (London), concertos at St David's Hall (Cardiff) and at the Mozart Auditorium (Zaragosa), Spain. Broadcasts include performances on BBC Radio, Canal+ and ABC Australia.
Read Gareth Owen's lesson

CHENYIN LI is a celebrated concert pianist known for her fiery and intelligent performances of a wide variety of repertoire. Having won multiple international competitions, she has established herself as a versatile player who shines in both solo repertoire as well as concerto. Chenyin has performed in many prestigious venues across the UK, Europe and Asia and her extensive discography includes more than 70 albums for *Pianist*.
Listen to Chenyin Li on this issue's album

SCORES

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Warm-up exercises

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Moderato in C

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Waltz Op 64 No 2

Music typeset by Beautiful Setting

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ABILITY RATING ELEMENTARY

THOMAS DUNHILL
SWAYING BRANCHES FROM FIRST YEAR PIECES

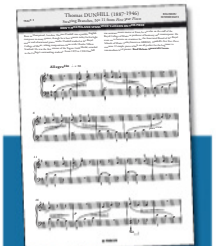
This calm, contemplative and quiet piece requires a seamless transition of the melody line from one hand to the other, says **Melanie Spanswick**

Key C major **Tempo** Allegretto **Style** Late Romantic
Will improve your ✓ Legato ✓ Phrasing ✓ Soft dynamics

Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946) was a prolific British composer who wrote many pedagogical piano pieces. Published in 1935, his *First Year Pieces* comprise 12 short pieces of which Swaying Branches is No 11. It is characterised by a light texture, solid tonality, and a charming melodic line which passes between the hands. A metronome mark of a dotted minim set at 56 bpm will capture the calm, tranquil mood. The piece is constructed in four-bar phrases and note patterns often remain in a convenient five-finger position.

Swaying Branches can be practised hands-together from the outset. That's because the hands don't often play simultaneously. Notes must run smoothly from one hand to the other; an example of this can be seen right at the start, between bars 1 and 2. Practise two bars at a time, using a helpful tool which I often talk about: 'blocking out' (also known as 'chunking'). For example, in bar 1 and 2, the G, B, and D in the LH part can be combined with the E and G in the RH. If you play them as one chord, the notes and fingerings can be easily learned. Do this slowly with every two-bar passage, moving through the piece from beginning to end in this manner.

Keep a firm, rhythmic pulse. Avoid rhythmic instability between the hands by setting a firm metronome pulse. Start slowly, with a crotchet beat of about 120 bpm which will allow sufficient time to 'place' every note. Pay special attention to the notes which run directly from one hand to the other, such as the D at the end of bar 1 to the E at the start of bar 2, as it's often too easy to rush here. Try to 'sit' on each 'tick' of the metronome and only start to raise the tempo when confident.



SEE SCORES SECTION

The rests are very important. Two-bar note patterns such as those at bars 1-2, 9-10, 11-12 and 31-32 all contain crotchet rests which allow time for the music to breathe. Count these rests carefully as you move through each phrase, avoiding the temptation to cut them short, which might potentially disrupt the peaceful mood.

A legato touch is paramount. Finger legato – that is, moving from note to note without any gaps in the sound – can be created by fingers 'walking' along the keys. As one finger leaves a key, so the next is depressed almost simultaneously, and therefore as one note's sound dies, the next is already heard. This slight overlapping of sound gives the illusion of a completely smooth musical line. To achieve this, keep fingers close to the keys and transfer weight smoothly from one finger to another.

Good phrasing is a necessity. Phrase markings run between the hands in a similar manner to the note patterns. An elegant, well-shaped phrase is created with the use of smooth finger legato along with the specific dynamic markings. Notice the small crescendo as the note patterns move from the LH to RH in bars 1-2, and then a decrescendo, as they move from the RH to LH in bars 3-4. An elongated crescendo will also be effective between bars 9-14, after which a shorter decrescendo will be necessary at bar 16 before the opening melody returns at bar 17.

LEARNING TIP

In keeping with the character of the piece, staccato chords should be played lightly and using a non legato touch for a gentle, delicate sound.

***Mezzo piano* (*mp*) is the maximum dynamic.** Most of the piece requires a soft, muted tonal colour reminiscent of branches swaying in the breeze. Play the LH chords at bars 3 and 7 extremely softly, as they provide a hushed accompaniment. Similarly, the chords at bars 19 and 23 must be played quietly, so aim for a slower finger depression into the key for a softer sound. The sustaining pedal is not necessary for most of this piece, but a short dab on the chords at bars 19 and 23, and the final chord, will add colour. ■

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ABILITY RATING INTERMEDIATE

CLEMENTI
RONDO FROM SONATINA OP 36 NO 4

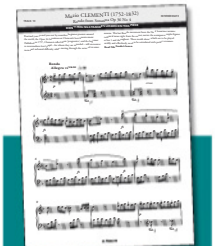
With its catchy six-figure semiquaver motif, this sparkling Rondo is crisp, elegant, and a little bit addictive, says **Nils Franke**

Key F major **Tempo** Allegro vivace **Style** Classical
Will improve your ✓ Legato playing ✓ Ornamentation ✓ Hand coordination

Muzio Clementi's *Six Nouvelles Sonatinas pour le Clavecin ou Piano-Forte* Op 36 has become one of the staple repertoire pieces for students learning to play music of what we nowadays call the Classical period. The success of the work was immediate: between its first publication in the late 1790s and a revision by the composer in 1820 there were no fewer than six editions, which are as much testimony to Clementi's entrepreneurial abilities as his skill as a composer and teacher. In short, it's a centrepiece of the teaching repertoire, and there are good reasons for it.

Clementi's piano writing was both individual and highly influential. Whilst some of his earlier works show Scarlatti's influence in their musical inventiveness and in the interest in devising specific technical formulae, the composer's journeys across Europe from 1780 onwards show how quickly he absorbed the works of others, which in turn furthered Clementi's own imaginative approach to the piano.

Dating from the time of square pianos and fortepianos, the sound of the music as Clementi would have heard it was light and transparent. So, quite different from the cross-strung pianos of today. Clementi was an early advocate of legato playing, as documented in his tutor book, *Introduction to the Art of playing the Piano Forte* Op 42 (1801), which makes his music so relevant to the training of pianists today.



SEE SCORES SECTION

A word about fingering: The score includes some of Clementi's own combined with my editorial suggestions. (Helpfully for us, Clementi included his own fingerings almost as an integral part of the score in some later editions.)

As is customary for its time, Clementi included no pedal marking in the score. The different editions of the work cover the period in time when players used knee levers (!) to when the pedal began to be used in piano making. In other words, use the right pedal on today's instrument sparingly, and only to (briefly) enhance the strong beats of a bar.

There are two types of ornaments in this Rondo: the turn (bar 21 and subsequent bars) and the trill (bars 30, 35 and 39). In the context of this piece, the turn starts on the upper note and leads to a polyrhythm of four demisemiquavers in the RH, played against three semiquavers in the LH. The division is a playing of four notes against three, which need to be metrically exact. Although that might be problematic in the early learning stages, it'll lead to an elegant and smooth-sounding outcome. The trill also starts on the upper note and consists of eight demisemiquavers, the last two of which are notated by the composer as the lead-in to the next beat. In other words, the polyrhythm of four against three is used for both ornaments, but the length and connection to the subsequent beat is different.

LEARNING TIP

Switch the slow practice of semiquaver passages between legato and staccato. It will do much to improve your finger control.

The appearance of octaves in the LH in bars 42-49 is a dramatic musical point. This justifies the *ff* in bar 44. Their placing on the off-beats in bars 42-44 adds to the drama, and are most effective if the first semiquaver of a group of six in the RH is played firmly which helps to accentuate the off-beat octaves in the LH.

The semiquaver passages offer an excellent opportunity for some 'from the knuckle' playing. By this I mean using the 'bridge' position of the hand for maximum control of articulation. Evenly positioned fingers (in relation to the keys) will also help achieve that brilliance in sound. Whether applied to the LH bars 4-10 or the scales in bars 3-4, think in hand positions, if only because the composer did! Much of the music lies well under the fingers, providing you choose the obvious finger pattern. ■

www.nils-franke.com

CHOPIN
WALTZ IN C SHARP MINOR

With three distinct sections containing a variety of technical challenges, this tender Waltz requires intense work by both hands: **Gareth Owen** shows how it's done

Chopin's Waltz in C sharp minor Op 64 No 2 was composed in 1847 and sits nicely between the sparkling No 1 in D flat ('Minute') and the lilting No 3 in A flat. It was written for Madame la Baronne Nathaniel de Rothschild – a painter, a friend of the composer and a member of the prominent banking family. Other Chopin pieces in C sharp minor include the Etude Op 10 No 4, Nocturnes Op 27 No 1 and the Op posth No 20, and Scherzo No 3. Published in 1847, the Waltz was one of the last pieces to be published during Chopin's lifetime, alongside the Sonata for Cello and Piano Op 65.

Consisting of three sections in ABCBAB form, it contains four general defining technical features within:

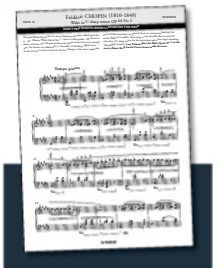
- a leaping LH with the lower bass note often on the first beat of the bar (in the A section)
- a two-part RH melody (A section)
- running quavers in a regular pattern in the RH (B section)
- a legato melody in D flat major (C section)

Chopin's pupil and friend, Wilhelm von Lenz, wrote this of the Waltz:

'It was difficult to satisfy Chopin in the Waltz. Only he was capable of linking (properly) the only (!) semiquaver in the third bar with the succeeding crotchet.'

Working on a solid left hand

As with so many pieces with leaps in the LH part, I would learn this first. An easy way to learn the notes and commit the harmony to the ear, is to play the LH part in both hands, with the first beat in the LH and the second and third beats in the RH. Once you have this framework in place, develop the LH leaps to the bass with an octave thumb extension. This is done by placing your thumb silently on the octave above the note you are aiming for. This way, the thumb acts as your eyes to find the note an octave below. You can then try to play the LH part with your eyes closed! The harmony is the basis for the phrasing, so feel the harmonic tension as it travels away from the tonic and back again in bars 1-10 and 10-17. I would aim for a cautious crotchet = 120/130 in this opening so that there is an option for a *più mosso* in the B section, contrasting with the *più lento* in the C section. Aim for a warm and rich bass note on the first beat of each bar and a lighter touch, especially in the thumb, on beats 2 and 3.



SEE SCORES SECTION

The right hand and its many guises

Chopin demands the highest quality of tone in the RH part. A beautiful duet in sixths in the first two bars, enjoy the feeling of sinking with the weight of your arm and hand when moving from the G♯ upbeat to the E in the first bar, bringing the wrist up slowly to catch the natural diminuendo as the chord moves down a semitone into bar 2. I would opt to play bars 3 and 4 starting with a thumb and second finger on the F♯ and G♯. The fourth finger will end up playing the acciaccatura here, so play these lightly and keep the thumb soft and light. The aim here is to be rhythmical, which can be a challenge with all the repeated F♯s. You can practise these bars by playing the thumbs on their own, as well as the top part without the thumb. A gentle up-bow 'sweep' can be generated to manage the hairpin crescendo in these bars which adds to the elasticity in the phrasing.

The repeated-note figures in bars 10, 12 and onwards, and again in bars 26-32, need careful balancing between the parts as well as good control of the fingers – especially when re-taking the repeated notes. By using a strong fingertip, a light touch and a flexible wrist, these phrases can be shaped according to the rise and fall in the

© Erica Worth

writing. The thumb often acts as a pivot to stabilise the hand and it needs constant attention to keep it loose so as not to restrict the free movement of the wrist. Most editions suggest a 2-3 fingering when ascending and 3-2 descending. 3-1 works well at the end of bar 16. The aim is to play the repeated notes as smoothly as possible, and this can be done by catching the first note of each repeating pair halfway up and re-taking it before it is released fully. There can be some flexibility in the tempo in this section as well, but beware of straying from the main tempo. The fingering of 2-4-3 on the mordent in bar 30 is excellent and will work well with a light and flexible hand/wrist and it is often played as a triplet. Other than the usual hairpins, no firm dynamics are written in the score. The rich harmonies demand a deep, but warm tone and what is written into the score is helpful enough for phrasing and finding contrasting colours.

Più mosso (B section)

The B section is a wonderful exercise in hand and wrist flexibility, as well as finger control. One can imagine Chopin's slender hand and long fingers caressing the keyboard with a beautiful and mellifluous tone. The RH can rotate gently to play the descending passages in bars 33-39 and be careful to choose a fingering that suits the hand in bar 40 so that it flows unimpeded into the new phrase at bar 41. You can practise the rotating movement by repeating the first three notes of each bar followed by repeating the last two notes. Focus on feeling the freedom in the forearm, wrist and the hand, and aim to prepare the thumb carefully at it approaches the last note in each bar to avoid any undue heaviness.

I would mention again the need to know the LH independently, as this will help to inform the colour you will aim for in each bar. Aim for a smooth and pearl-like tone in bars 45-48, with a disappearing diminuendo to the top C♯. This scale repeats six times throughout the piece; the more advanced pianist can experiment with contrasting articulation, colour and dynamics, as well as using some flexibility in the tempo. The *pianissimo* in bar 49, and again in the analogous passages later in the piece, is an invitation to experiment with the *una corda* pedal. For the more adventurous pianist, aim to find a soft tone without the *una corda* first, saving it until the diminuendo at the very end of the passage.

One can imagine Chopin's slender hand and long fingers caressing the keyboard with a beautiful and mellifluous tone

Più lento (C section)

The C section is arguably the most challenging passage in this Waltz and requires an enquiring mind and attention to sound and colour. Again, I would mention the careful study of the LH part, voice-leading and a light thumb to avoid any bumpiness in the chord changes. Many notes are tied and held over into subsequent bars. These often create a suspension in the harmony and should be slightly emphasised. The tied B♭ from bar 67 is difficult to hold over with a second finger, so I would

change from second finger to thumb once the upper F on the first beat of the bar has been released. Similarly, I would adopt this for bar 71-72. The RH melody needs a *cantabile* touch with a legato fingering. After the soft ending at the end of the B section, the radiant warmth of the key change into D flat major can be enjoyed with a deep tone in both the first melody notes and bass. Each phrase here begins with a diminuendo, implying a more resonant beginning to each descending phrase. Fitting in eight notes in bar 84 can be arranged in a duplet followed by two sets of triplets, and using a free and *improvisato* effect. The LH part in bars 92 and 93 can be tricky: I would use a uniform fingering of 5 on the single note and 3-2-1 on the chord and creep along the keyboard, staying close to the keys. The descending scale into the B section can fade away into the key change, with the LH prepared carefully for the B♯ at bar 97.

The subtle art of pedalling

We have all heard the famous words, 'pedal with your ears and not your foot'. This is very true in this piece and fortunately, pedal markings in most editions are clear and logical. A new pedal for each new harmony is obvious here, but varying depths of pedal can make a difference in tone and colour. A good example would be a lighter pedal in the B section to avoid too much blurring and careful changes in the C section when the suspended notes in the LH are resolved after the ties.

I hope this lesson helps you to explore the challenges in this wonderful piece, and gives you the confidence to experiment with the many characters and colours. ■

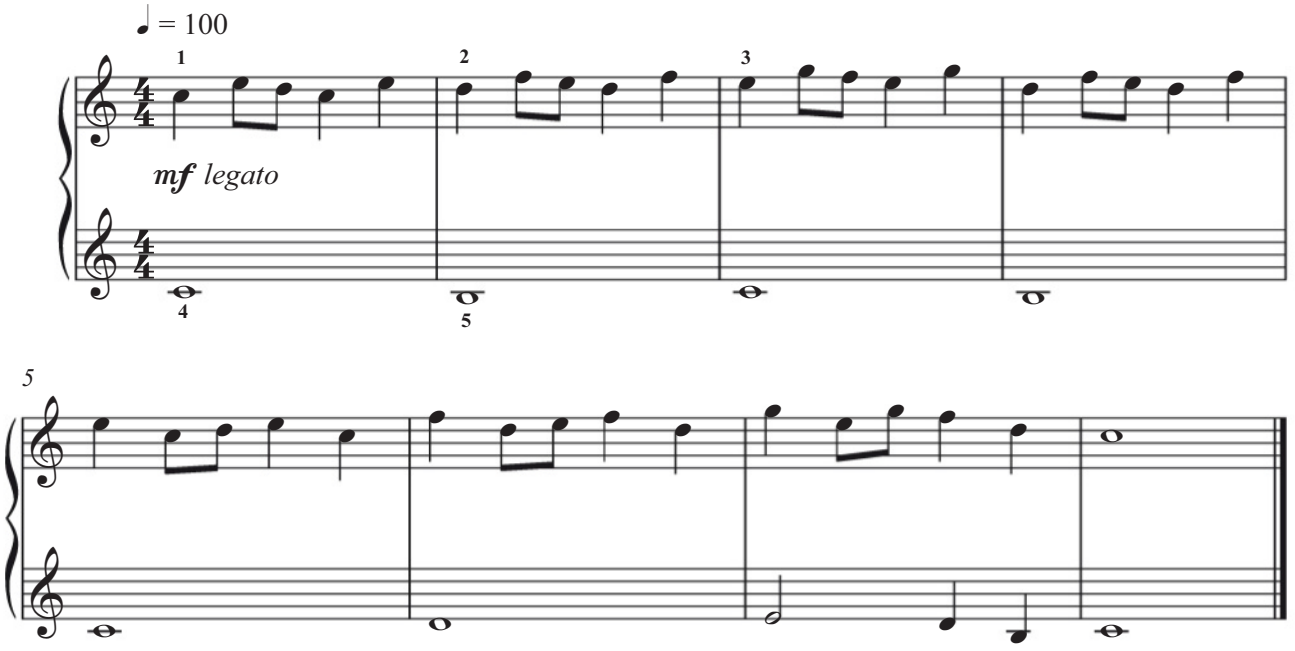
Concert pianist Gareth Owen is Head of Piano at Eton College. He also teaches at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.
Further information about Gareth Owen can be found on page 19.

HANS-GÜNTER HEUMANN
BEGINNERS KEYBOARD CLASS

LESSON 63: MORE WARM-UP EXERCISES

On these pages, *Pianist* covers the most basic stages of learning through a series of lessons by Hans-Günter Heumann. This issue we present short exercise pieces by German composer Louis Köhler which require treble-clef playing in both hands.

Three pieces from *Easiest Pieces* Op 190

Firstly, make sure that you are seated in a good postion. Your chair might need to be positioned slightly to the right – you are concentrating on the top half of the keyboard. Maintain a good legato, keeping the pulse as even as possible. Build speed over time.

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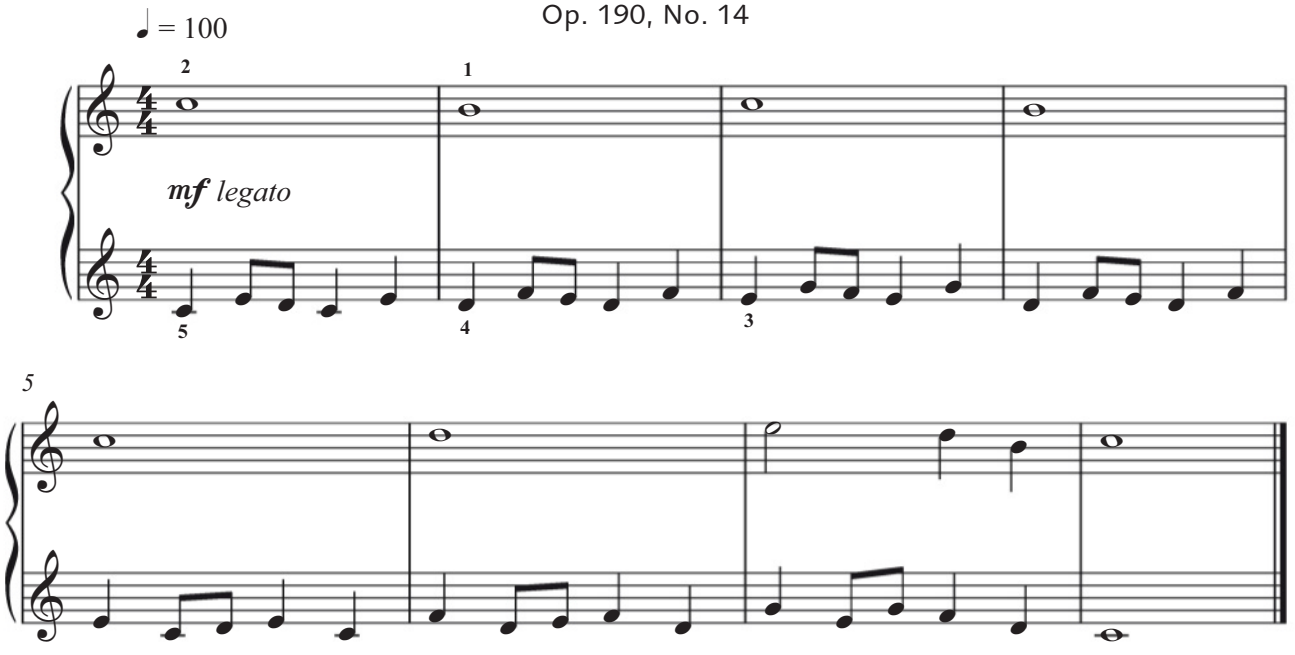
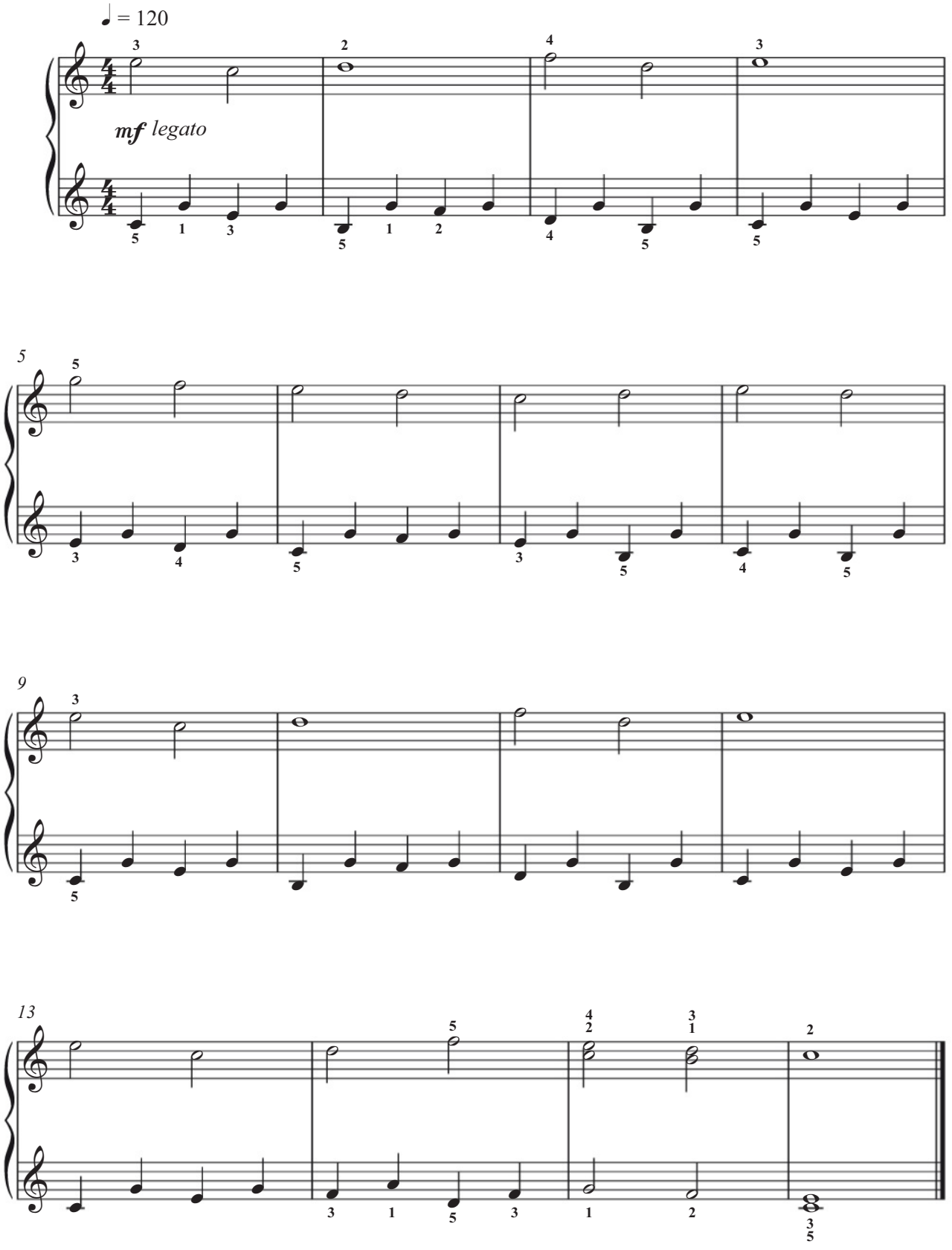
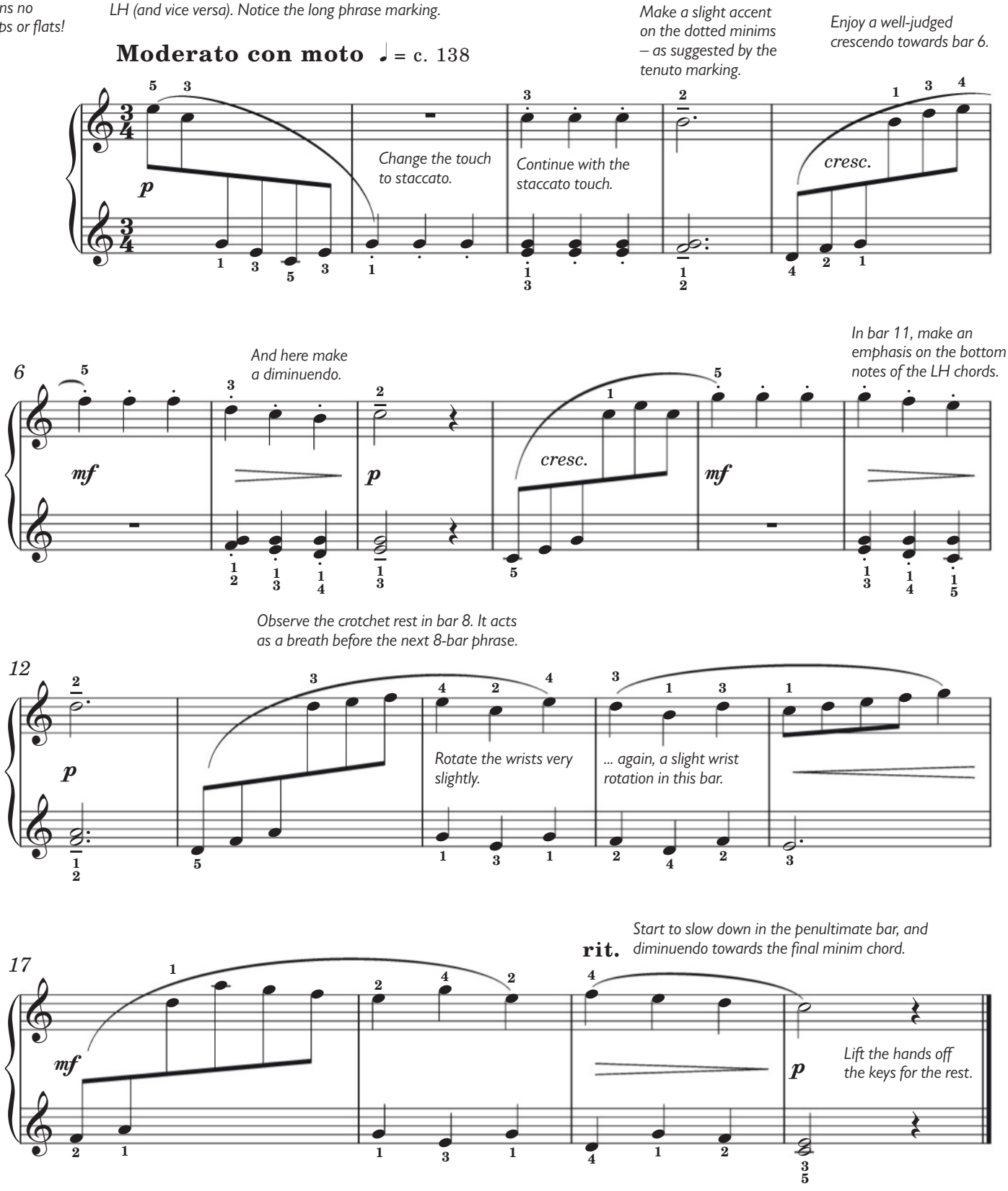

Hans-Günter Heumann continues his series for beginners in the next issue.
To find out more about Heumann, visit www.schott-music.com

TRACK 1

Arnoldo SARTORIO (1853-1936)
Moderato in C

BEGINNER

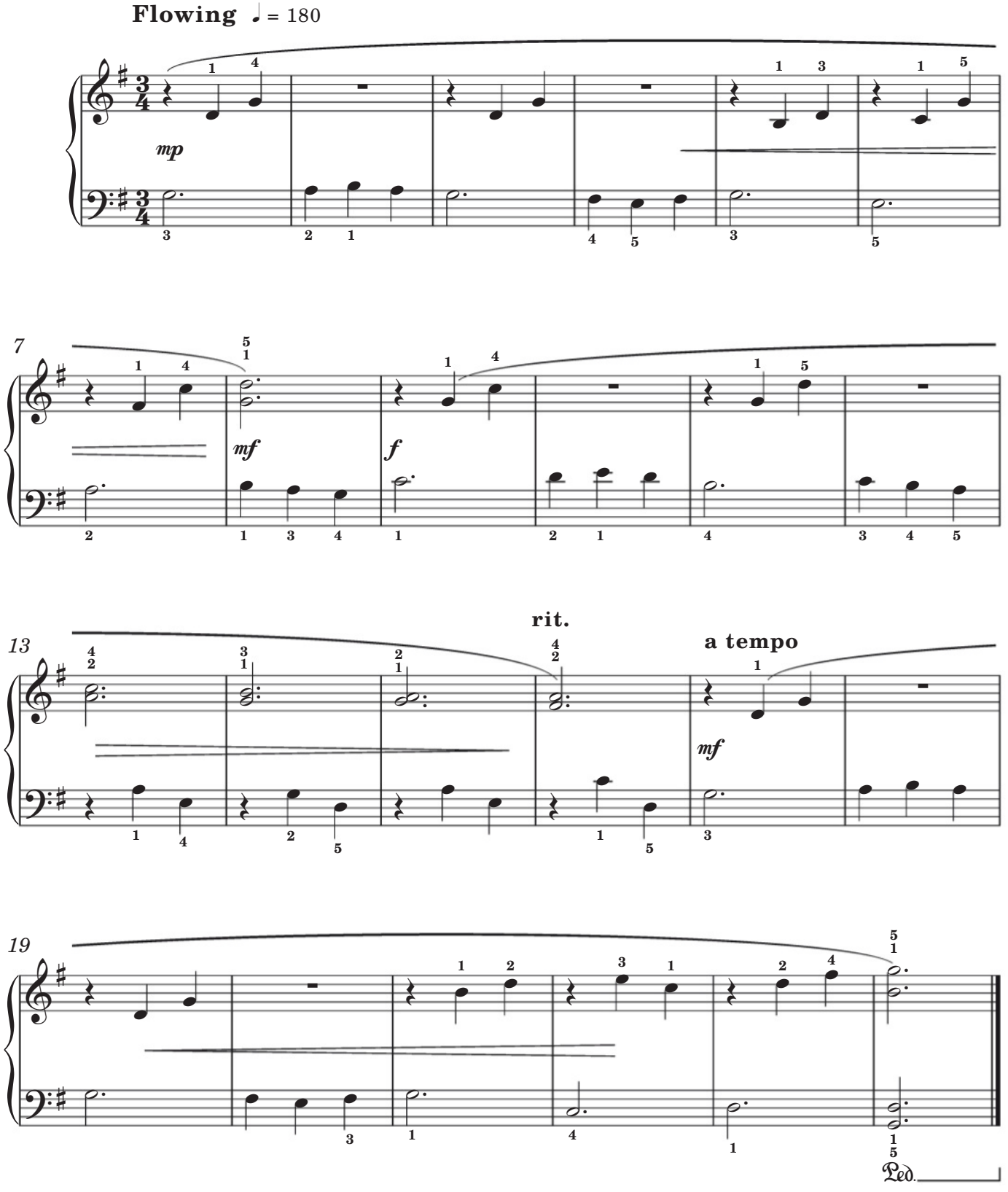
Virtually unknown today, German composer Arnoldo Sartorio was remembered by past audiences mainly for pedagogical pieces written for his piano students to play. Many of these were issued under pseudonyms, which include Felix Durand, T. Devrient and Christian Schäfer.

Sartorio has, however, made an appearance in *Pianist*; his delightful left-hand-only arrangement of Mendelssohn's *On Wings of Song* featured inside issue 122 along with a step-by-step lesson by Nils Franke. **Look at the technical tips on the score.**

TRACK 2

Melanie SPANSWICK
Strolling

BEGINNER

Notes from the composer: *Strolling* was inspired by one of my favourite sets of Grade 1 piano pieces, *Work and Play* by Felix Swinstead. His little collection contains 12 charming melodic gems which are both imaginative and fun to play.

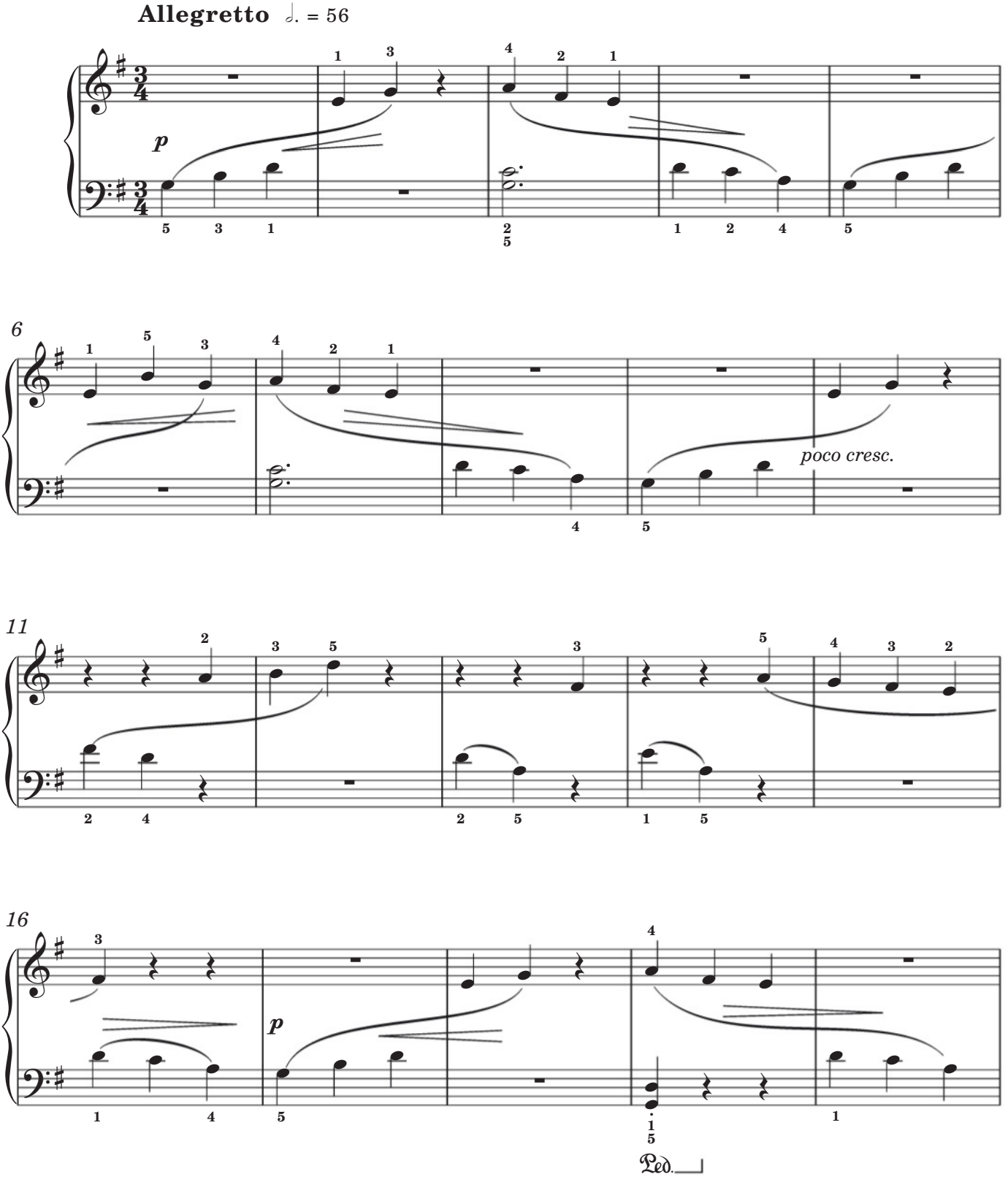
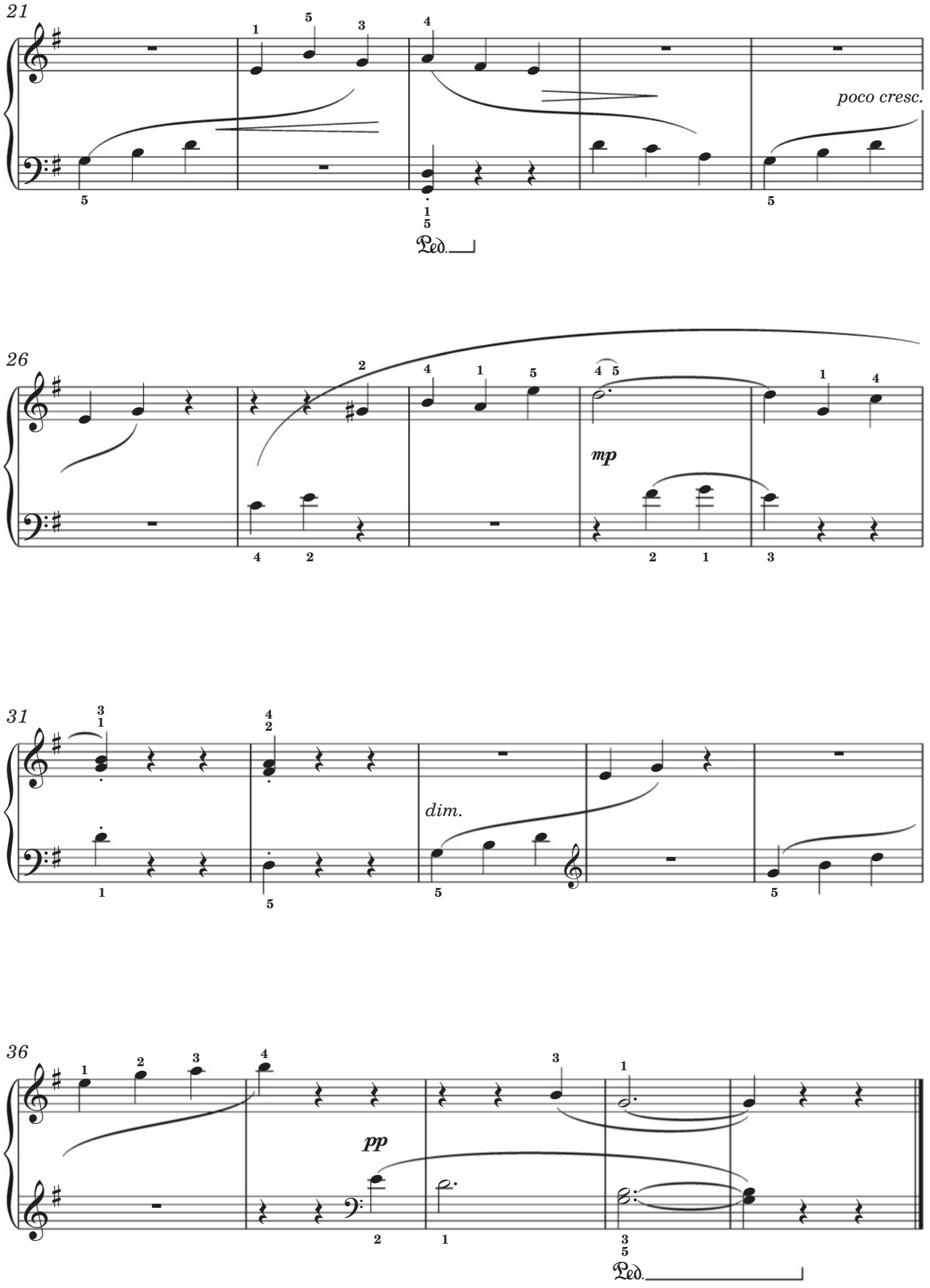
Strolling's tuneful LH melodic line requires minimal hand movement, so it lies comfortably under the hand – hence, a perfect piece for the elementary pianist. The leisurely pace, as suggested in the title, offers the player plenty of time for the RH to move around the keyboard. Be sure to work carefully on the two-note RH chords between bars 13-16, the last of which needs a swift hand turn. If your fingers aren't able to play the chords with a good legato touch, try a little sustaining pedal in order to help, and keep the chords soft and light. The LH tune demands a fuller sonority; a beautifully smooth legato line will be effective throughout, but is especially important from bars 9 to 10 where the second finger moves over the thumb. The ritenuto at bar 16 allows for a brief expressive pause before resuming to the 'a tempo' at bar 17.

TRACK 3

Thomas DUNHILL (1887-1946)

Swaying Branches, No 11 from *First Year Pieces*

BEGINNER/
INTERMEDIATE

DON'T MISS MELANIE SPANSWICK'S LESSON ON THIS PIECE

Born in Hampstead, London, Thomas Dunhill was a prolific English composer in many genres, though he is best known today for his light music and educational piano works. Dunhill studied at the Royal College of Music, taking composition classes with Charles Villiers Stanford. He was the first winner of the Tagore Gold Medal, awarded to the College's outstanding students. From 1899 to 1908 Dunhill was assistant music master at Eton; he was also on the staff of the Royal College of Music as professor of harmony and counterpoint. He went on to become an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (today known as ABRSM). Dunhill's *First Year Pieces* contains 12 simple pieces which are all perfect for the beginner to intermediate-level pianist. **Read Melanie Spanswick's lesson.**

21
poco cresc.
Ped.
26
mp
31
dim.
36
pp
Ped.

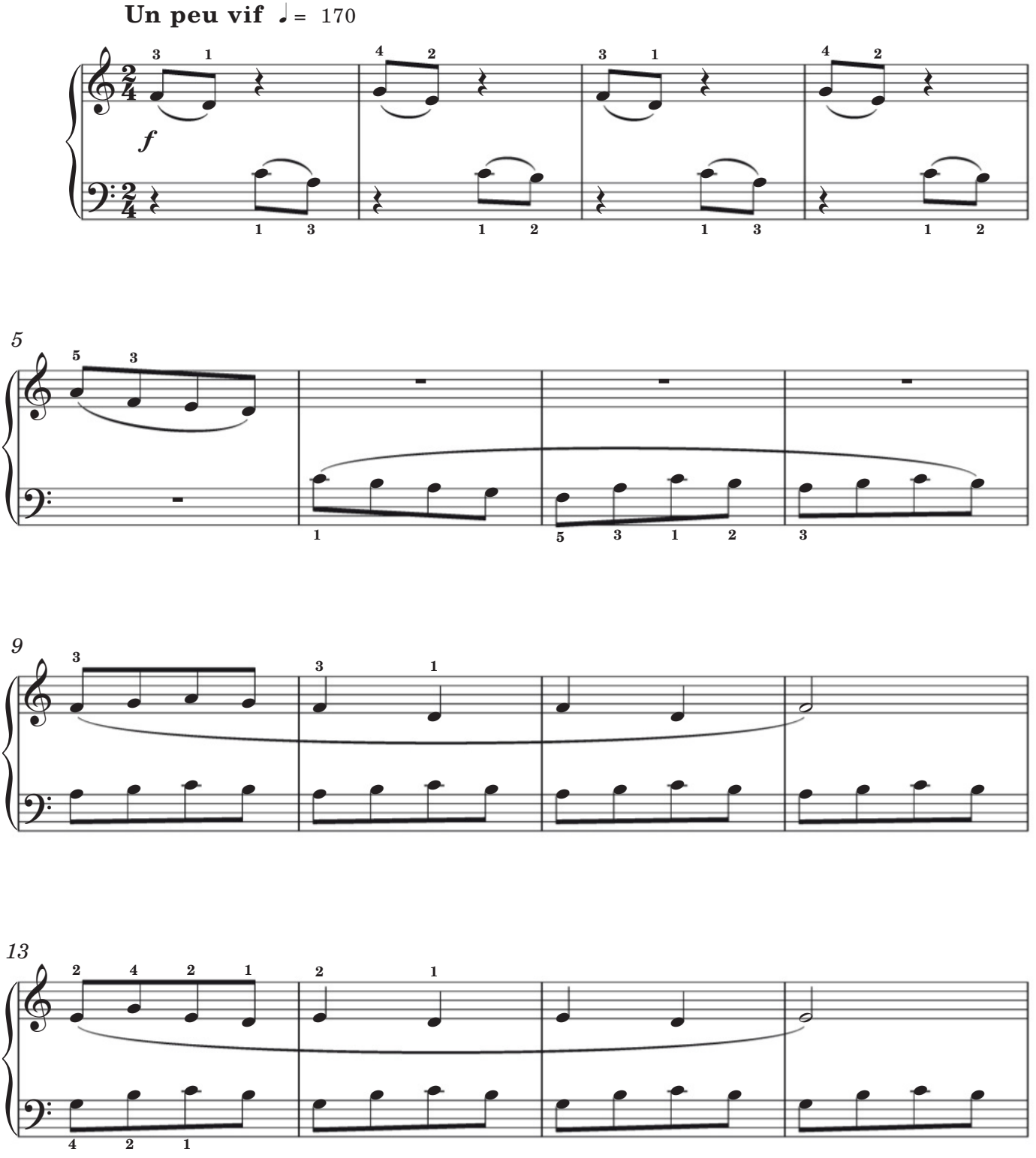
TRACK 4

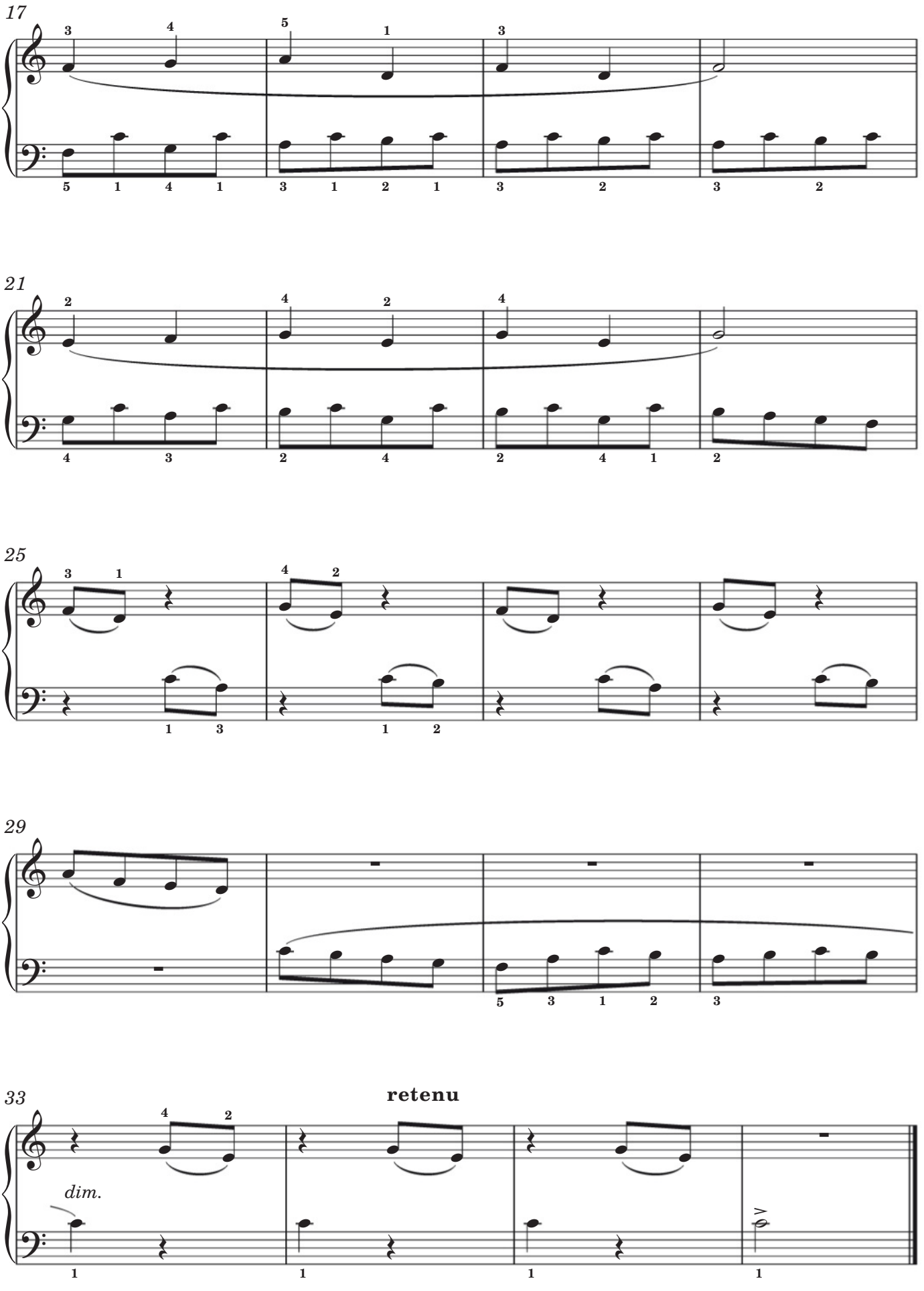
Erik SATIE (1866-1925)
Peccadilles importunes No 3

BEGINNER/
INTERMEDIATE

Composed in 1913, Satie's three short *Peccadilles importunes* ('Tiresome pranks') were dedicated to the pianist Marguerite Long. No 3, presented here, has a very long subtitle: 'Profiter de ce qu'il a des cors aux pieds pour lui prendre son cerceau' ('Taking advantage of his corns to steal his hoop'). Whatever that really means, who knows... but Satie did like to play games! The *Peccadilles importunes* belong to the set of beginner piano pieces entitled 'Enfantines'. The other two works within the set are called *Menus propos enfantins* (Childish small talk) and *Enfantillages pittoresques* (Picturesque child's play). They were written 'with the aim of preparing children for the sound patterns of modern music,' so said the composer.

Playing tips: Play the notes evenly and with great determination. With regards to speed, the tempo marking of 'Un peu vif' means 'rather fast'. At the start (and towards the end), the exchange of notes between the hands should sound seamless. Follow the phrase markings and make sure to keep in strict time, using a strong *forte* – only slowing down and lowering the dynamics in the last four bars. Pedal is not required.




17
21
25
29
33
retenu
dim.

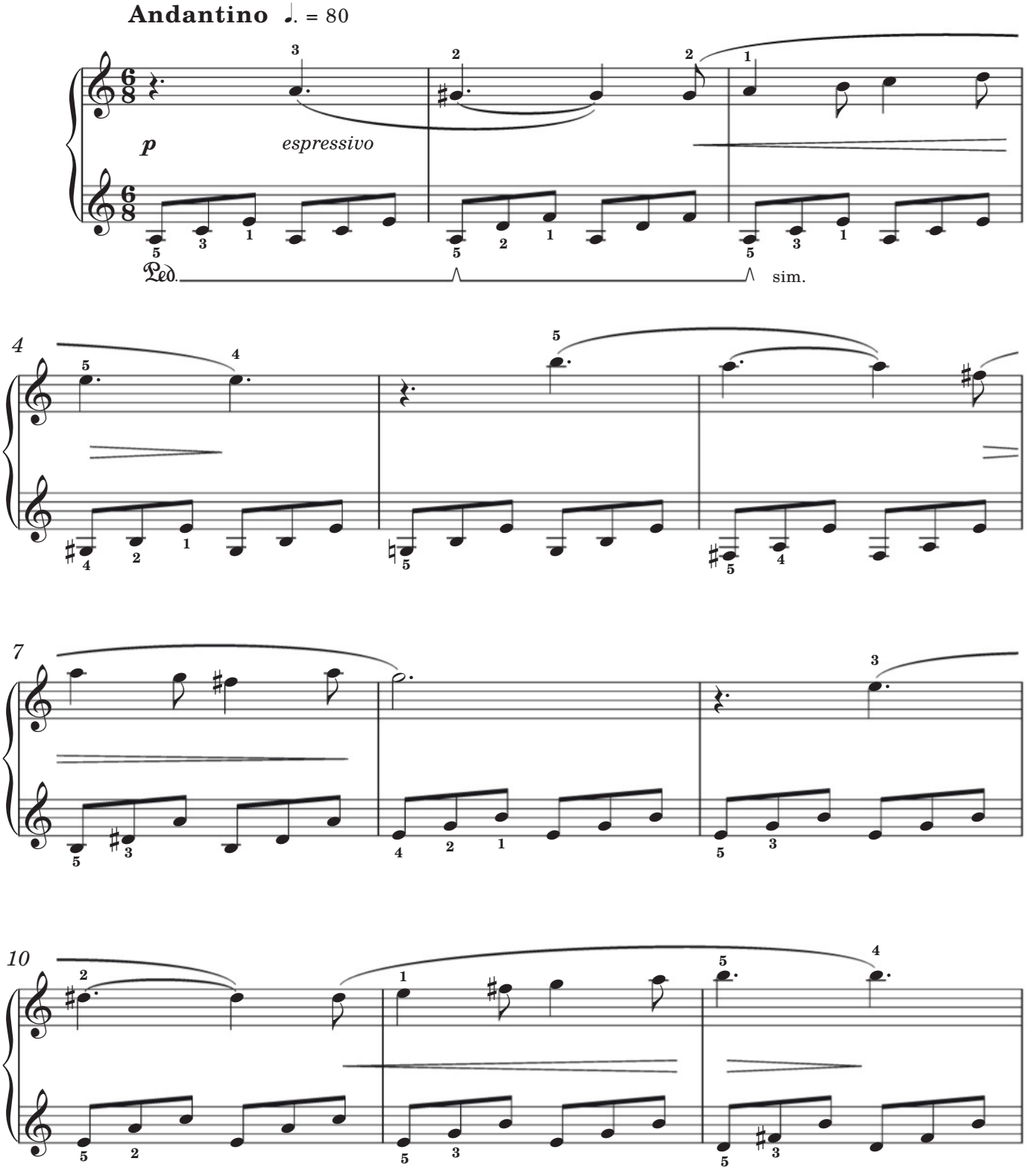
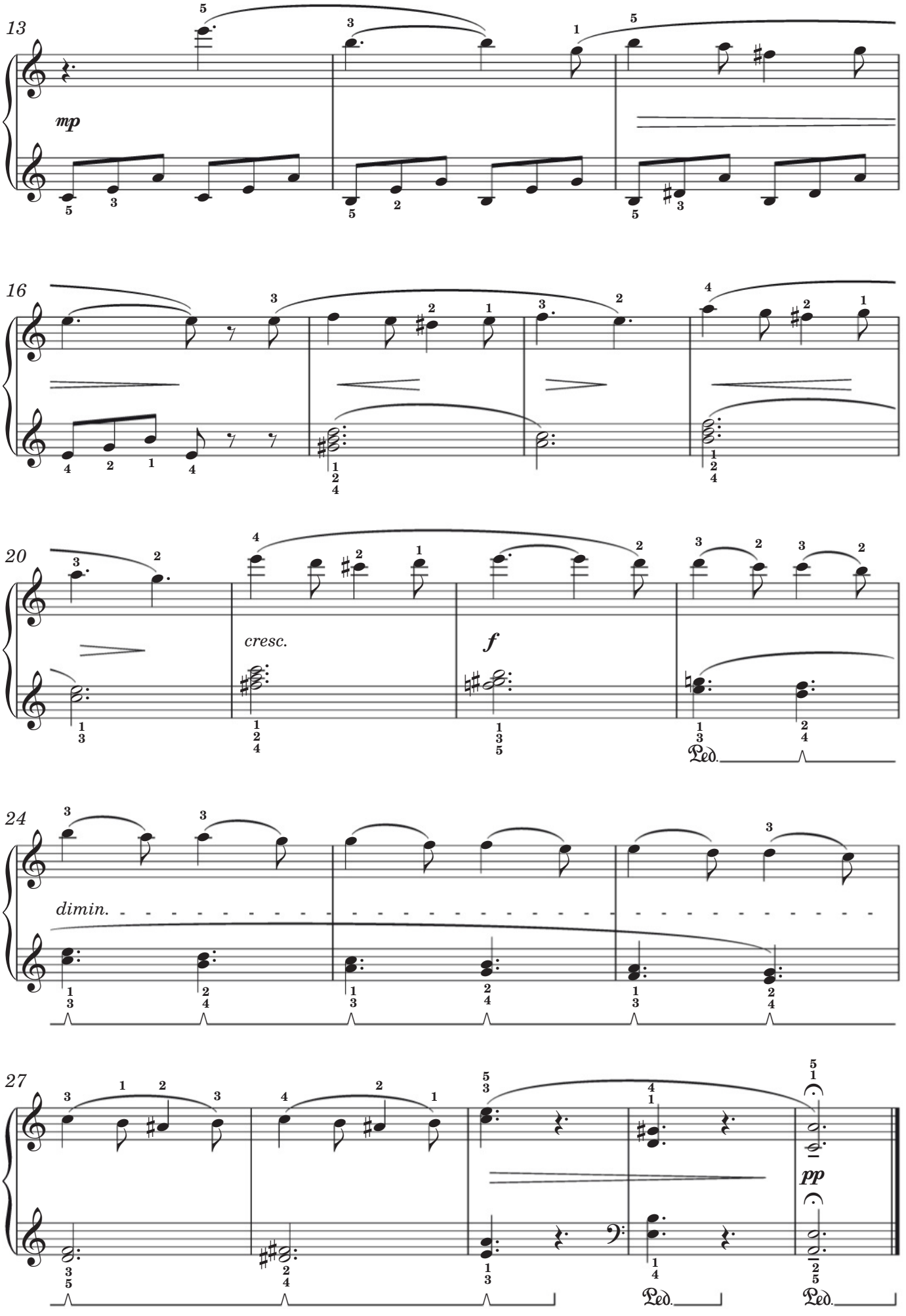
TRACK 5

Samuil MAYKAPAR (1867-1938)
The Little Orphan, *Biriulki* Op 28 No 2

INTERMEDIATE

Russian Romantic pianist, composer and teacher Samuil Maykapar became professor at the St Petersburg Conservatory. He wrote an array of piano pieces for all levels of players – this simple piece, The Little Orphan, appearing within the set of 26 pieces entitled *Biriulki* ('Trifles'). Two further Maykapar pieces appear inside these scores pages and you can read all about the composer in Matthew Mills' in-depth article.

Playing tips: This charming little piece calls for a good singing melody line, accompanied by an even and well-balanced LH. Imagine each of the slurred two-note figures is a poignant sigh. Play with plenty of dynamic contrast, especially in the crescendo-diminuendo phrases (e.g. bars 17-18), but avoid extremes. Clean legato pedalling will help with bars 23-27; alternatively, if you're feeling dextrous you could experiment with finger substitutions to achieve the same effect.

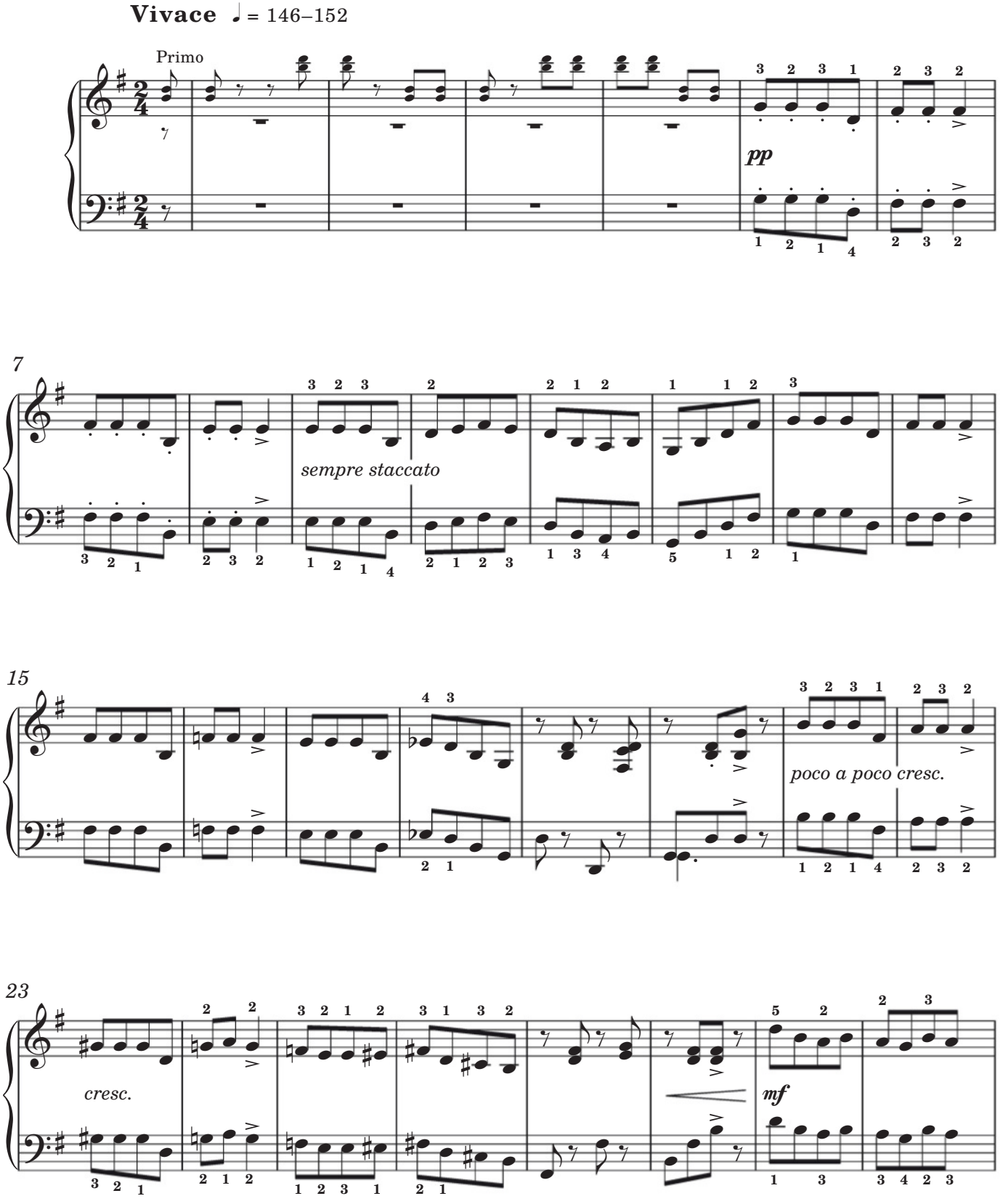
Read Matthew Mills' article on Maykapar inside this issue.

13
mp
16
20
cresc.
f
Ped.
24
dimin.
27
pp
Ped.
Ped.

Amy BEACH (1867-1944)

Katy-Dids, No 4 from *Summer Dreams* Op 47

WATCH CHENYIN LI & IAGO NUÑÉZ PLAY THIS DUET AT WWW.PIANISTMAGAZINE.COM

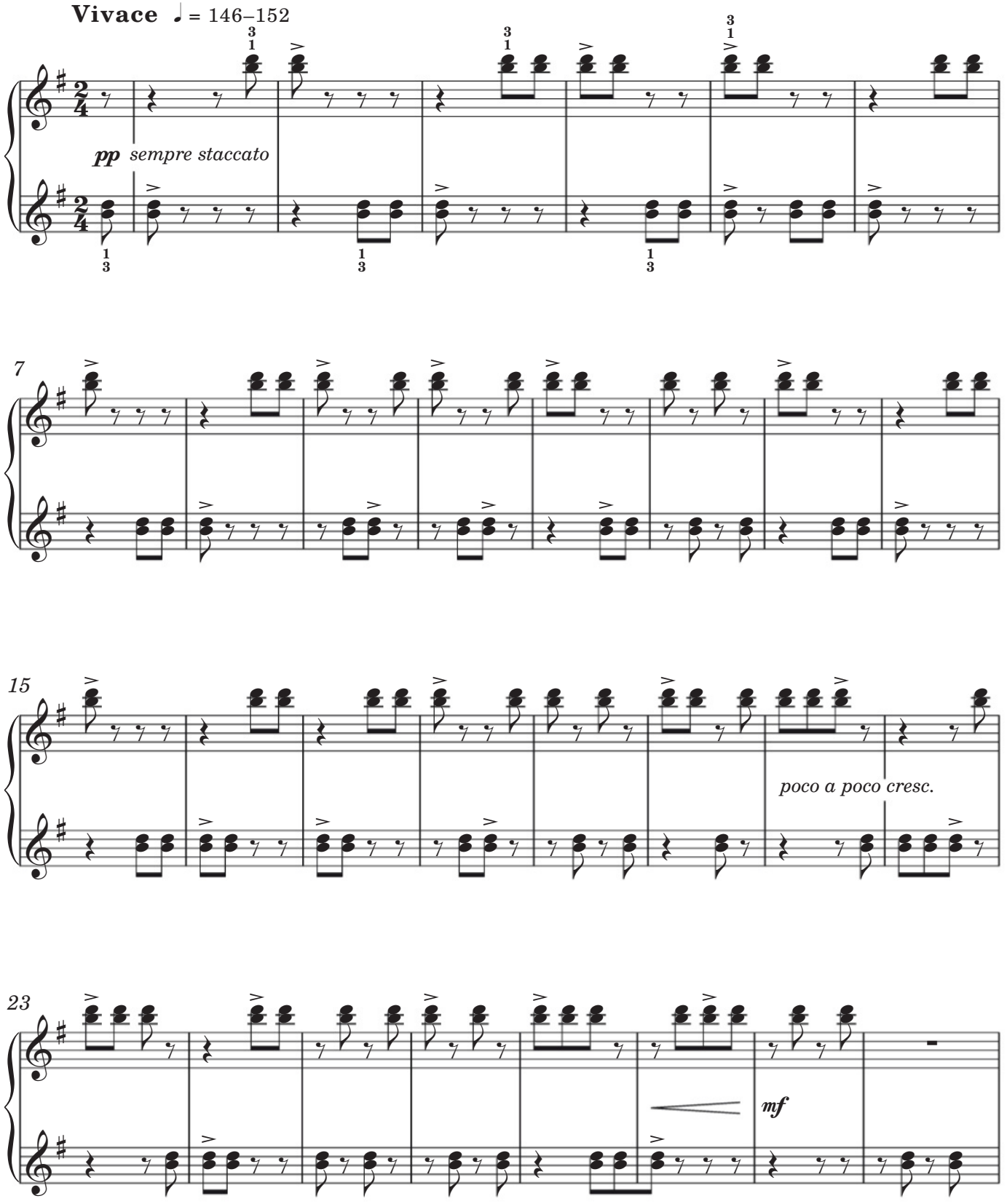
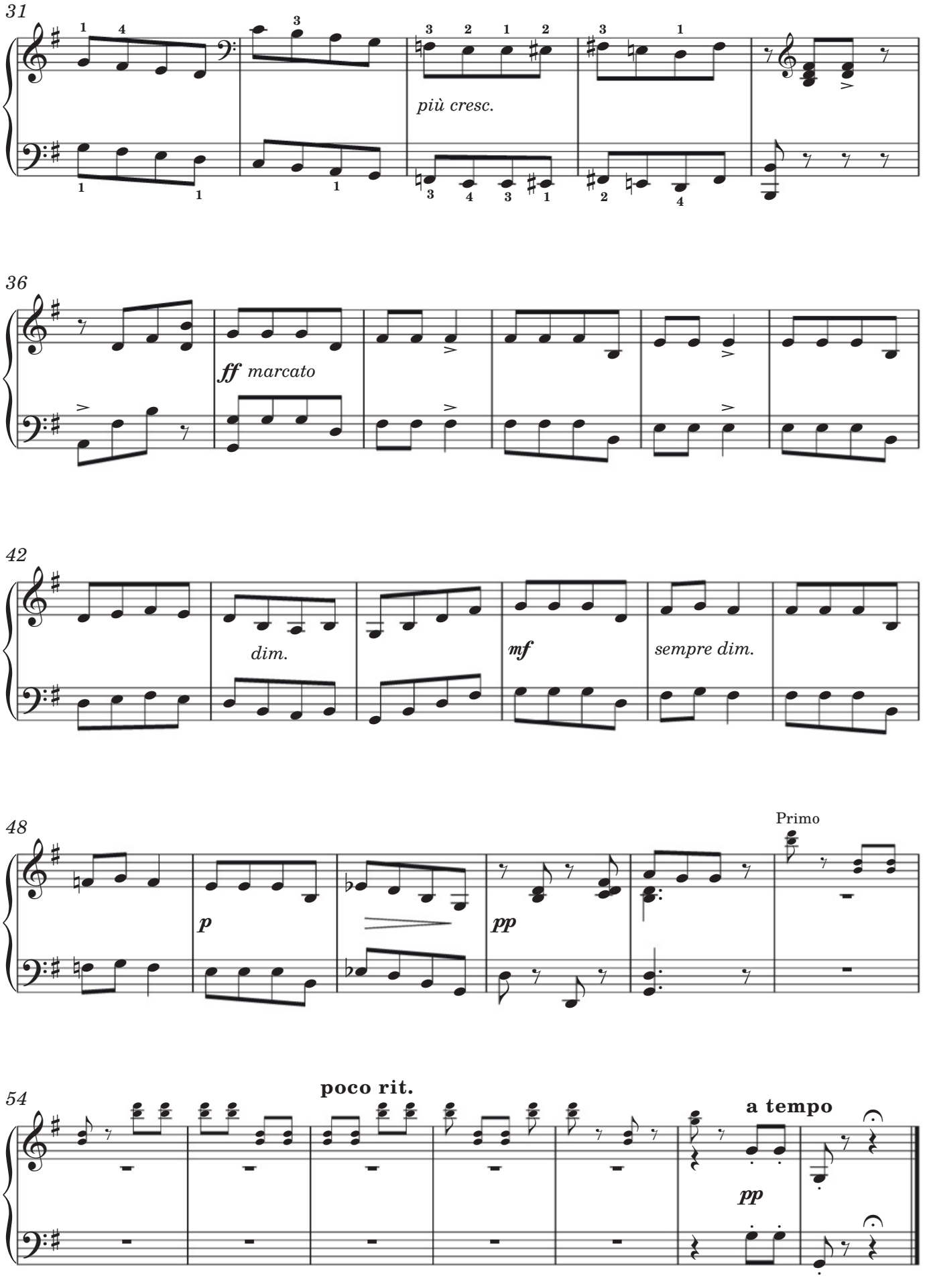
Summer Dreams Op 47 is a suite of six pieces for piano duet which Amy Beach composed in 1901. They are delightful and picturesque miniatures, evoking fairy tales and children's stories. We've done our best to research the meaning of No 4's title, 'Katy-Dids', to discover that a katydids is an insect similar to a grasshopper or cricket. The piece is indeed cheeky, jumpy and at times noisy... so maybe Beach did have the insect in mind!

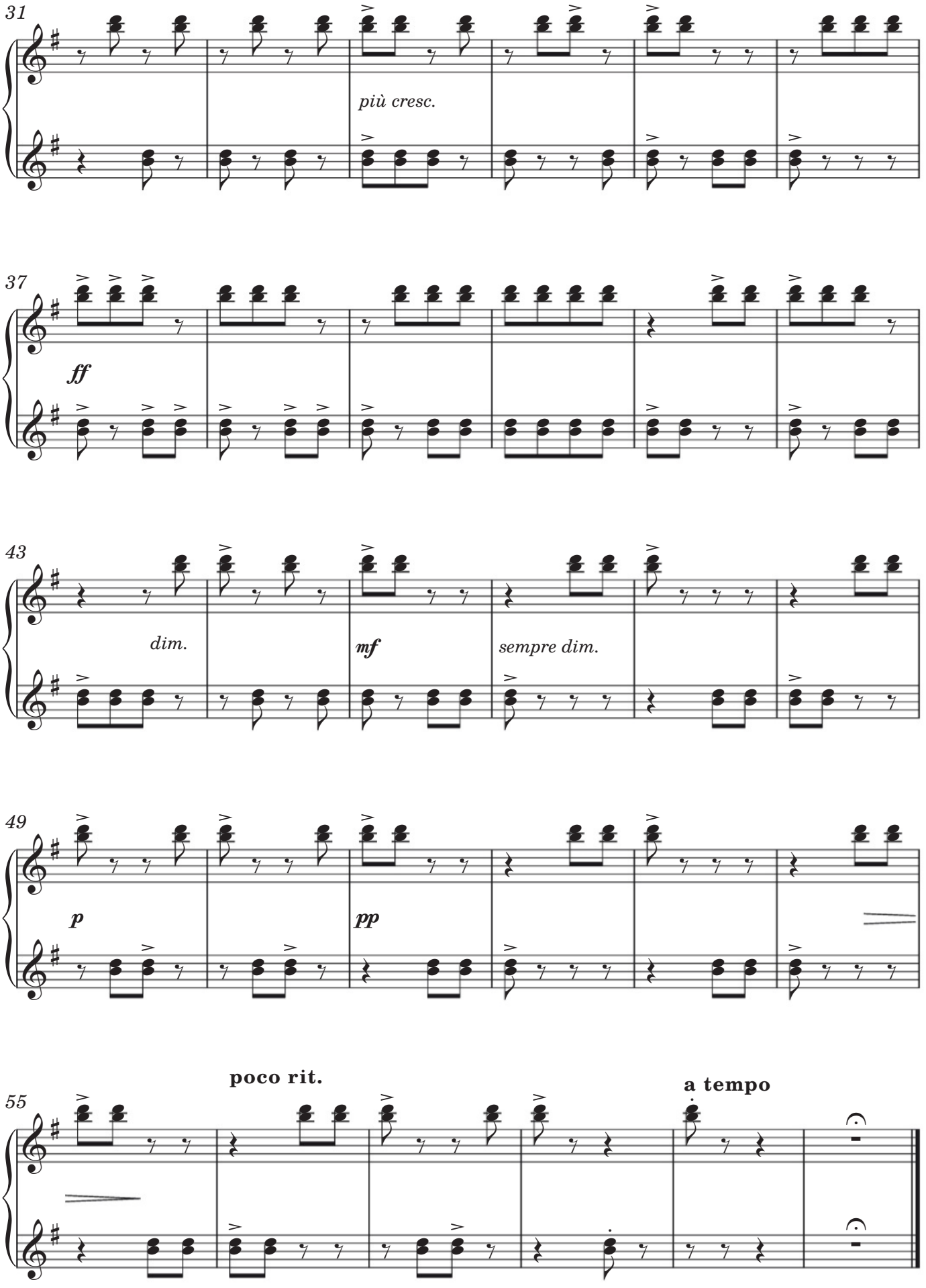
Secondo

Amy BEACH (1867-1944)

Katy-Dids, No 4 from *Summer Dreams* Op 47

WATCH CHENYIN LI & IAGO NUÑÉZ PLAY THIS DUET AT WWW.PIANISTMAGAZINE.COM

Playing tips: The Secondo is the hardest of the two parts, mainly because of the repeated notes. The notes themselves are easy enough to learn, but remember, it has to be played quickly! The use of alternate fingers on the repeated notes should help. The Primo part has a much easier ride. Remember to keep the notes staccato and always remain in strict time. Follow the changing dynamic markings which will help shape the piece.

Primo

31
più cresc.
36
ff marcato
42
dim.
mf
sempre dim.
48
p
pp
Primo
54
poco rit.
a tempo
pp


31
più cresc.
37
ff
43
dim.
mf
sempre dim.
49
p
pp
55
poco rit.
a tempo

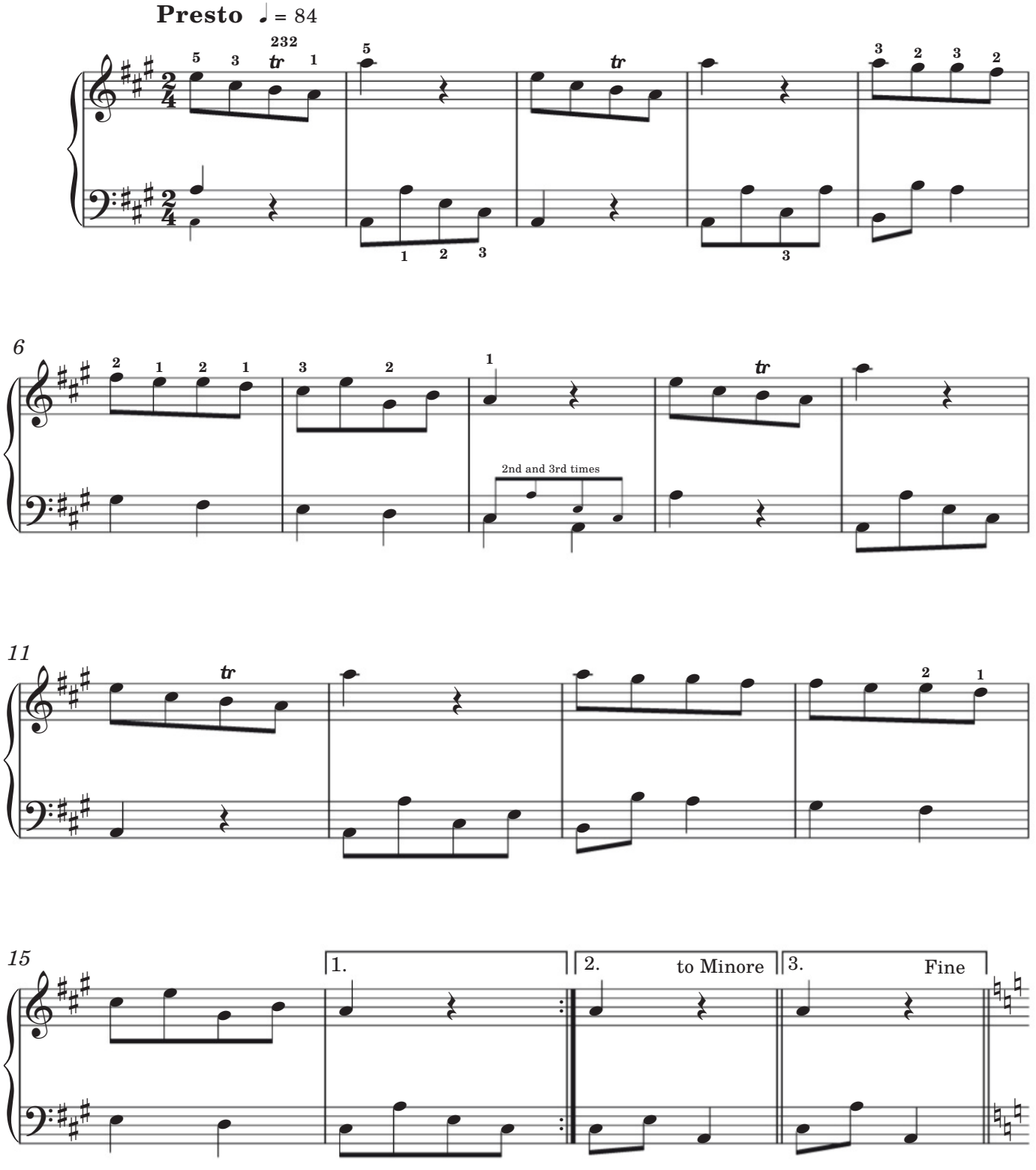
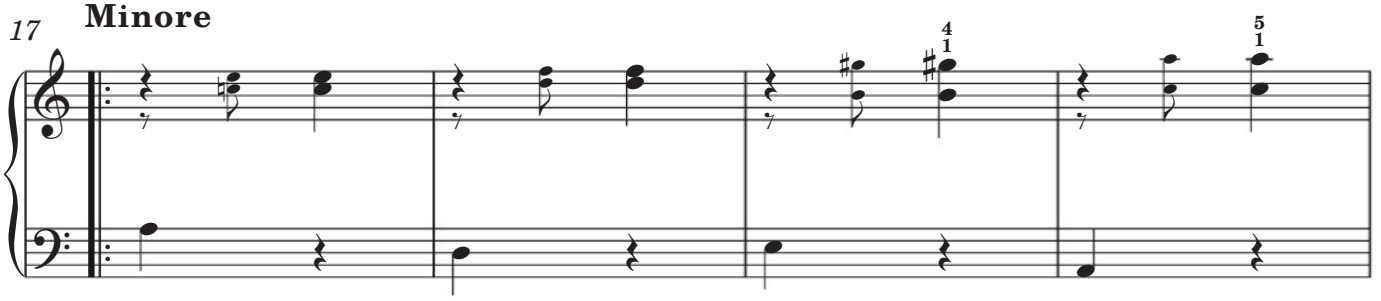
TRACK 7

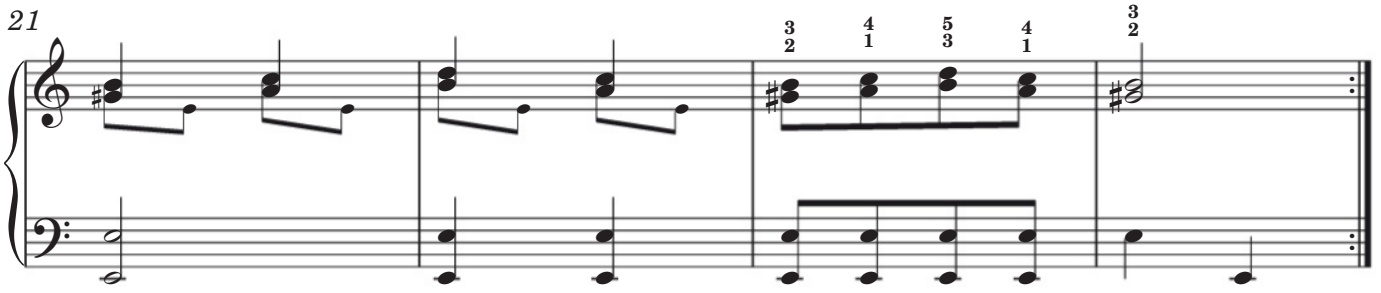
Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

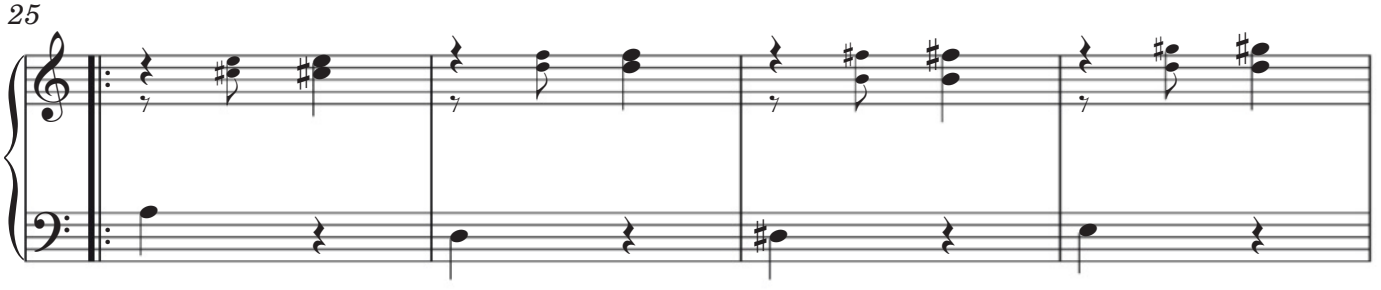
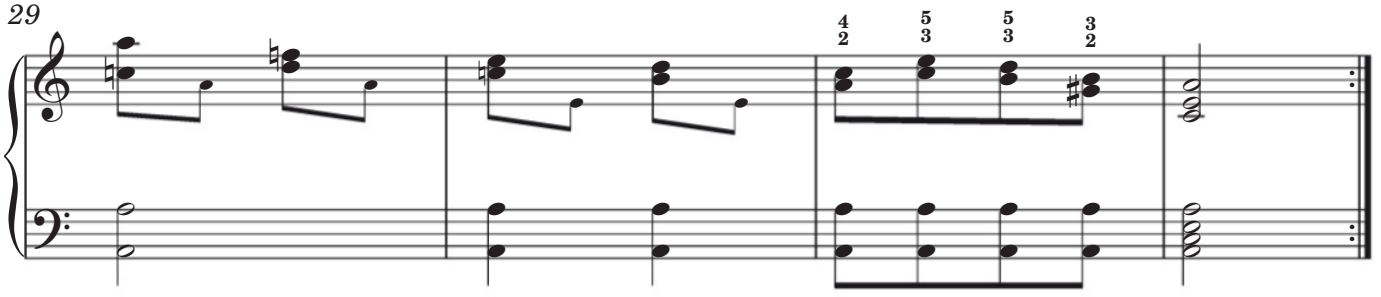
Presto from the *London Sketchbook* K 15l

INTERMEDIATE

The *London Sketchbook* is a series of 43 untitled pieces and sketches written by Mozart between 1764 and 1765 while he was London with his family on one of their 'grand tours'. The set of works is denoted by the K number (15) followed by its respective letter – i.e. 15a, 15b, 15c etc. Most pieces are extremely short, normally lasting between 40 seconds to a minute; however, some span as long as four minutes, as is the case with 15t.

Playing tips: This is a catchy piece! The more you play it, the more it will grow on you. The obvious technical issue is the trill in the RH at bars 1, 3, 9 and 11. Practise these bars out of context, in a very slow tempo. If the trill proves too awkward, we suggest leaving it out. Pedal is not needed.
A note about the smaller notes: These are to be played on the second or third repeats. Listen to the recording for further help.

17 **Minore**

21



25

29

Da capo Maggiore

TRACK 8

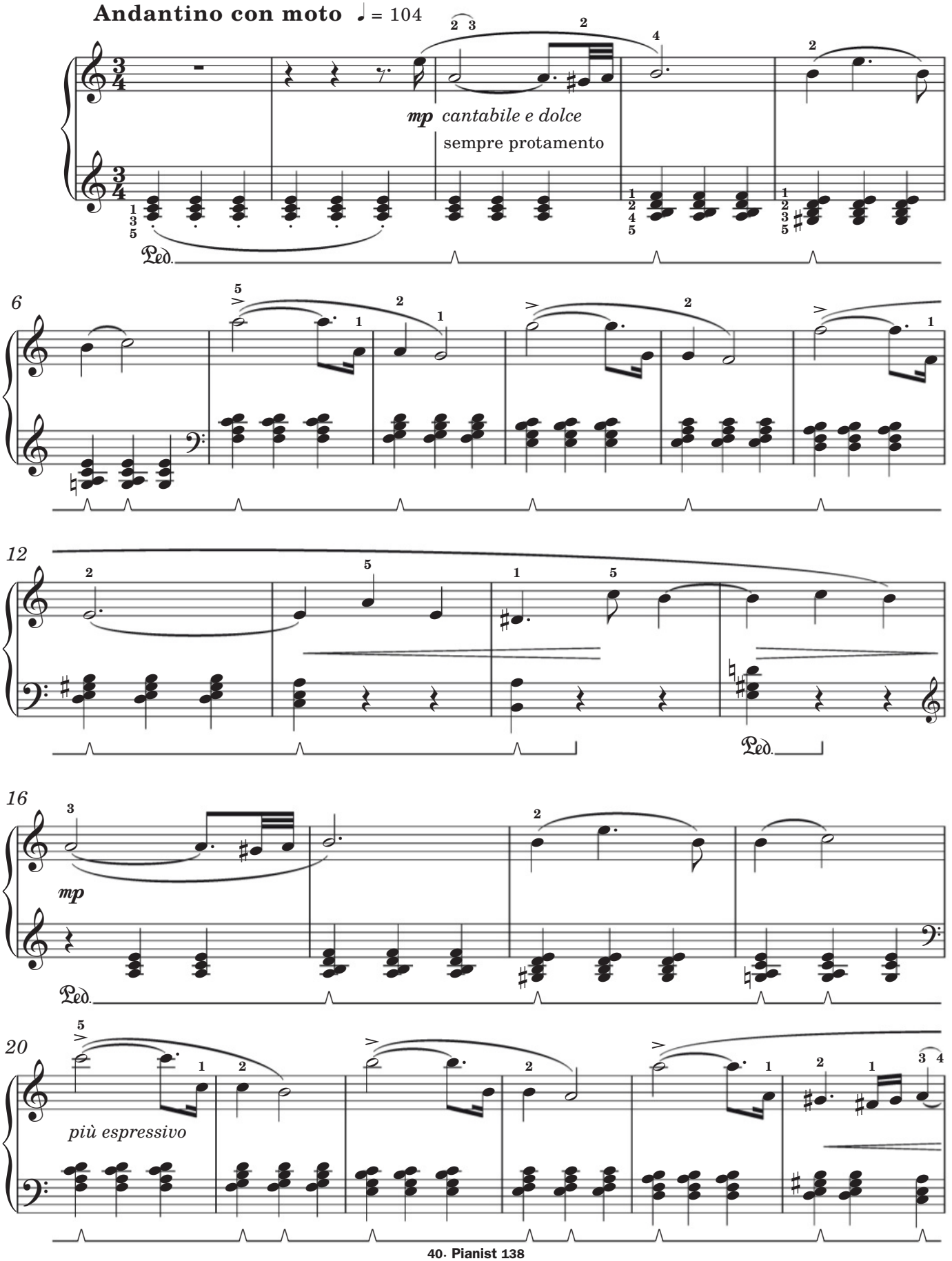
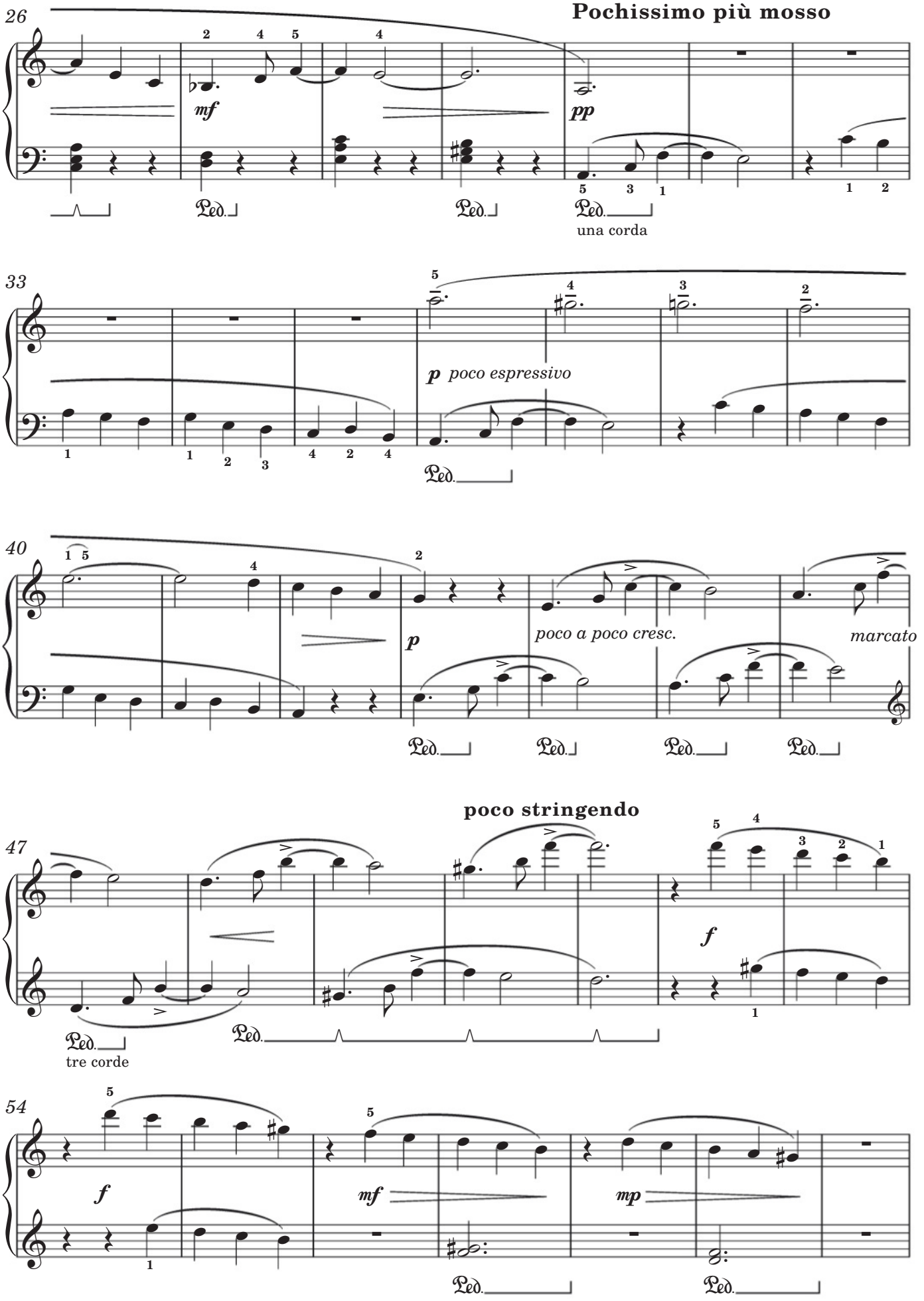
Samuil MAYKAPAR (1867-1938)

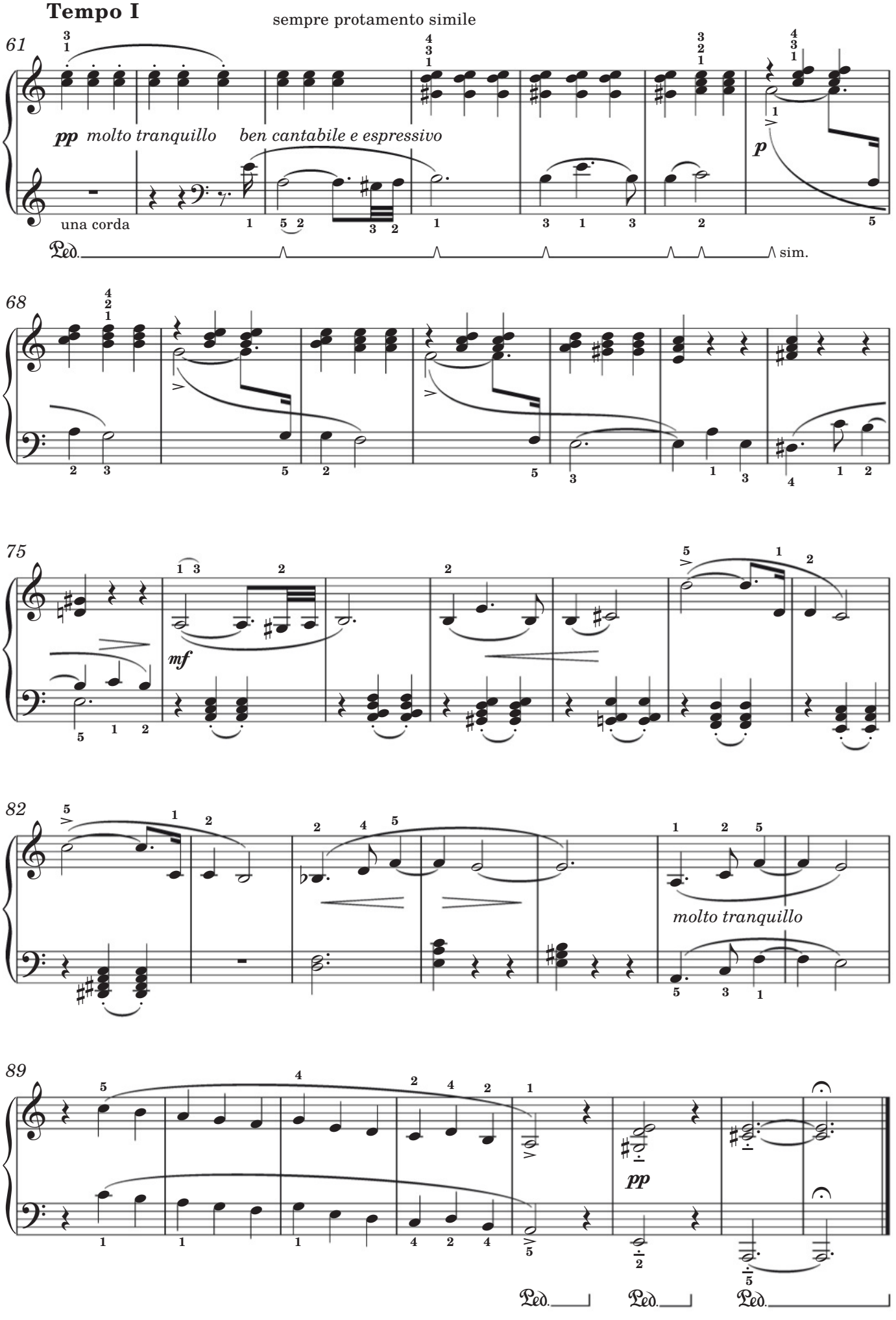
Arietta from *Grande Sonatine* Op 22

INTERMEDIATE

Playing tips: This piece is a wonderful study in balance: both hands have the opportunity to project a beautifully-phrased melody over a chordal accompaniment, while both voices in the imitative middle section need to sing equally. The 'portamento' touch is somewhere between staccato and tenuto – keep the fingers in contact with the key surface as you release each chord and aim for a gently pulsating effect, avoiding bumps or undue accents.

Read Matthew Mills' article on Maykapar.

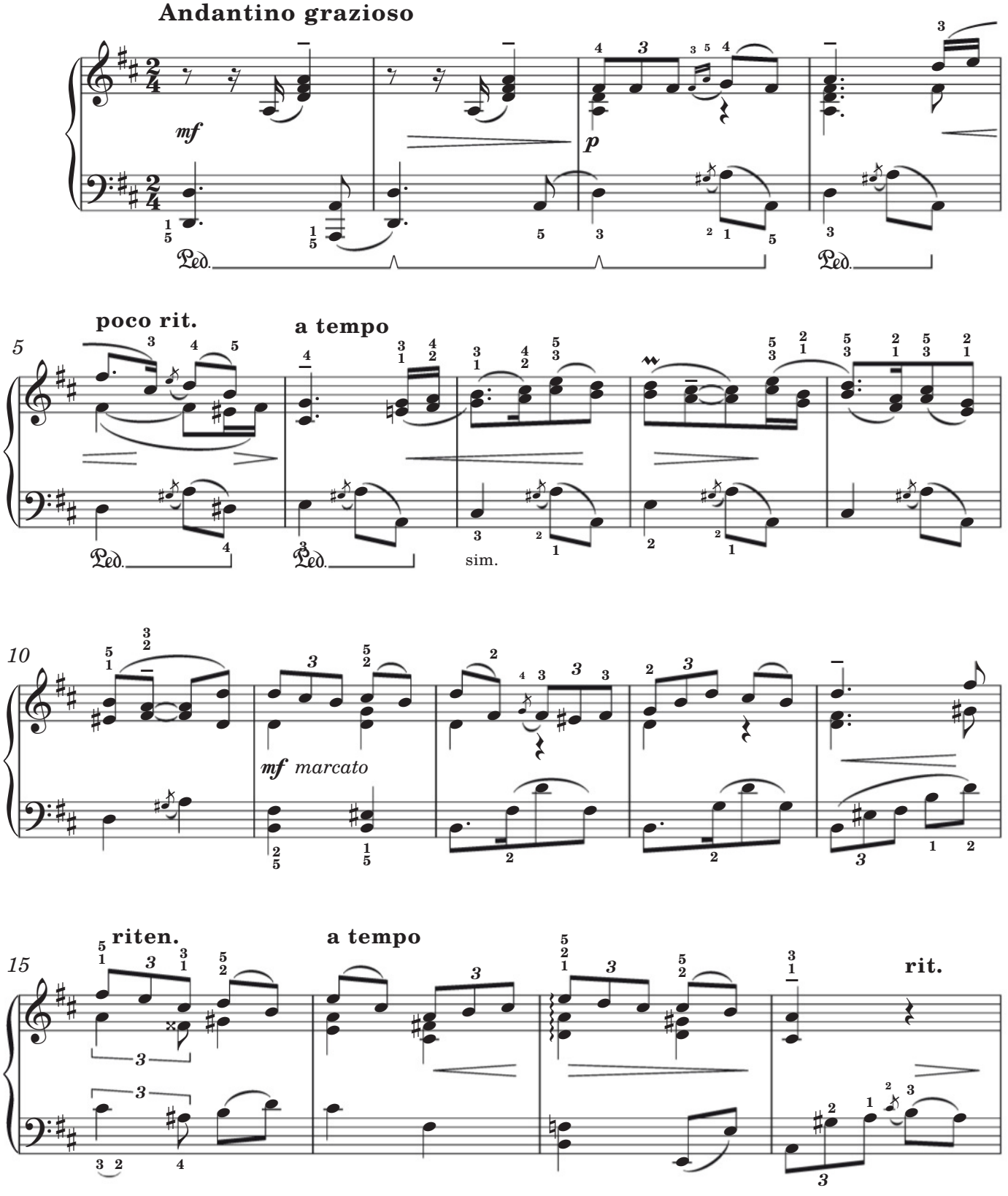
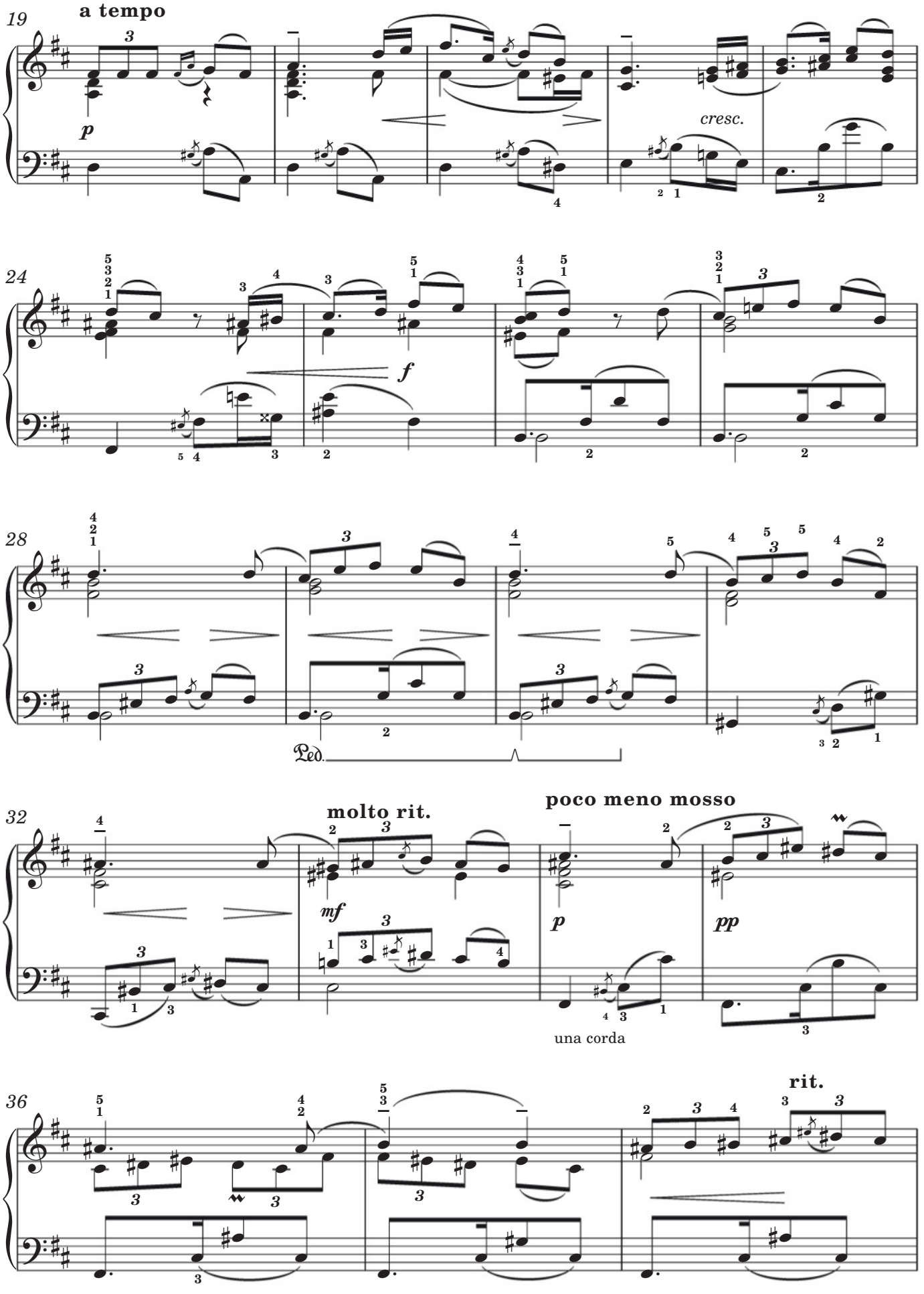
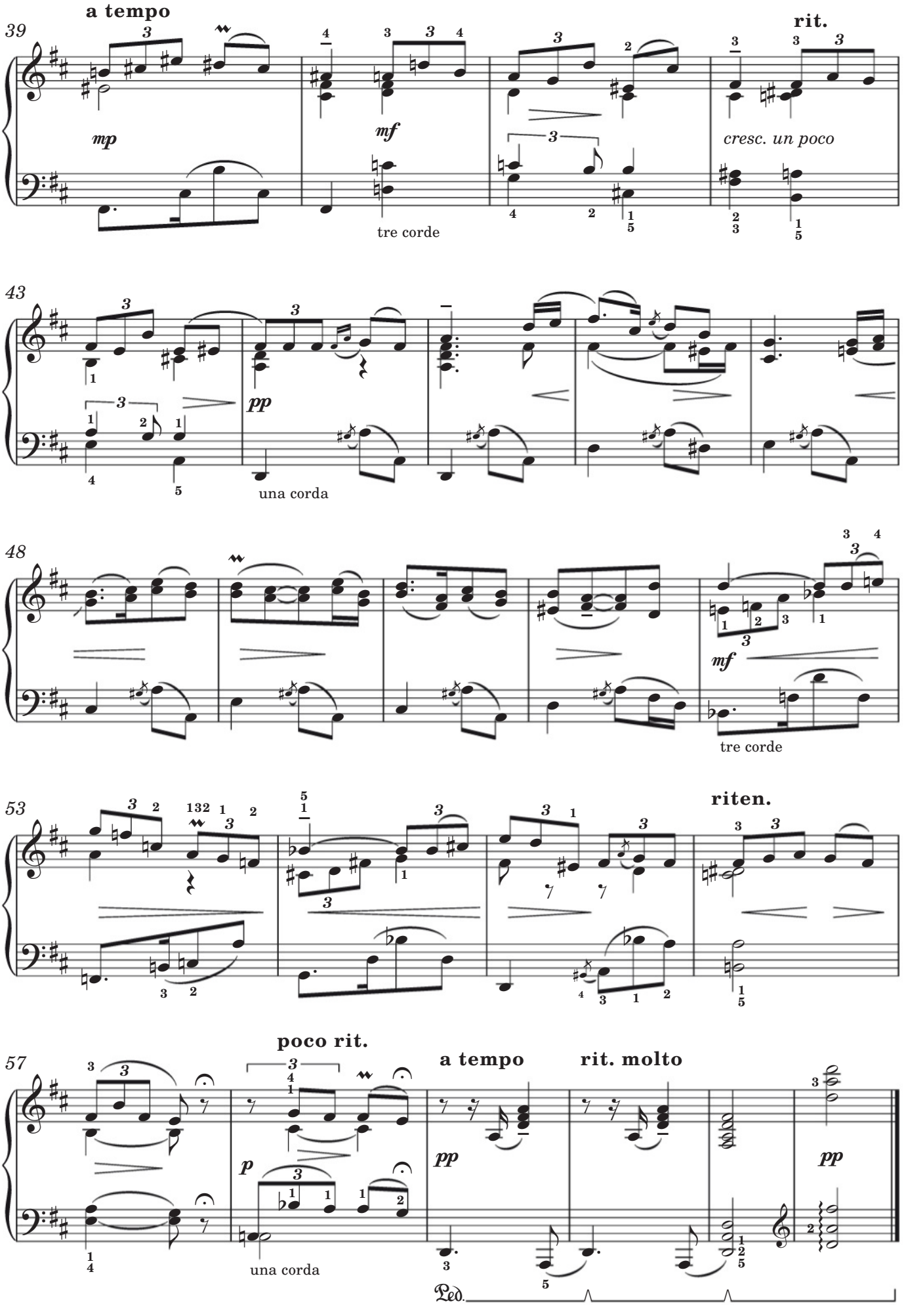


26
Pochissimo più mosso
mf
pp
una corda
33
p poco espressivo
40
p
poco a poco cresc.
marcato
47
poco stringendo
f
tre corde
54
f
mf
mp

Tempo I
sempre protamento simile
61
pp molto tranquillo
ben cantabile e espressivo
una corda
p
Ped.
sim.
68
75
mf
82
molto tranquillo
89
pp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

Isaac ALBÉNIZ (1860-1909)

Tango in D, No 2 from *España* Op 165

WATCH IAGO NUÑÉZ PLAY THIS AT WWW.PIANISTMAGAZINE.COM

Playing tips from Iago Nuñéz: This celebrated piece, written in 1890, predates the explosion of the tango as a popular dance in the slums of Buenos Aires. Like much of Albéniz's music, it is important to make links to its dance roots, but do not take as a model the music of Carlos Gardel or Astor Piazzolla; rather, the habanera, with which it shares its characteristic dotted rhythm. Feel free to explore the rubato opportunities that the melody clearly suggests, but maintain a sense of rhythmic discipline with the accompaniment. The acciaccaturas in the LH are important; keep them clean and crisp, whilst the triplets in the melody can be rather languid. The main melody returns three times, so see what you can do to create some differences in timbre with each iteration. There are some rather beautiful moments of call and response between both hands that need to be highlighted to be effective. For that extra dance feel, the recurring last quaver in the LH accompaniment part can be a bit detached, as if imitating the pizzicato of a double bass.
Pedal tips: See suggestions on the score.

19
a tempo
p
cresc.
24
f
28
Ped.
32
molto rit.
mf
poco meno mosso
p
pp
una corda
36
rit.

39
a tempo
mp
mf
tre corde
rit.
cresc. un poco
43
pp
una corda
48
mf
tre corde
53
riten.
57
poco rit.
p
una corda
a tempo
pp
rit. molto
pp
Ped.

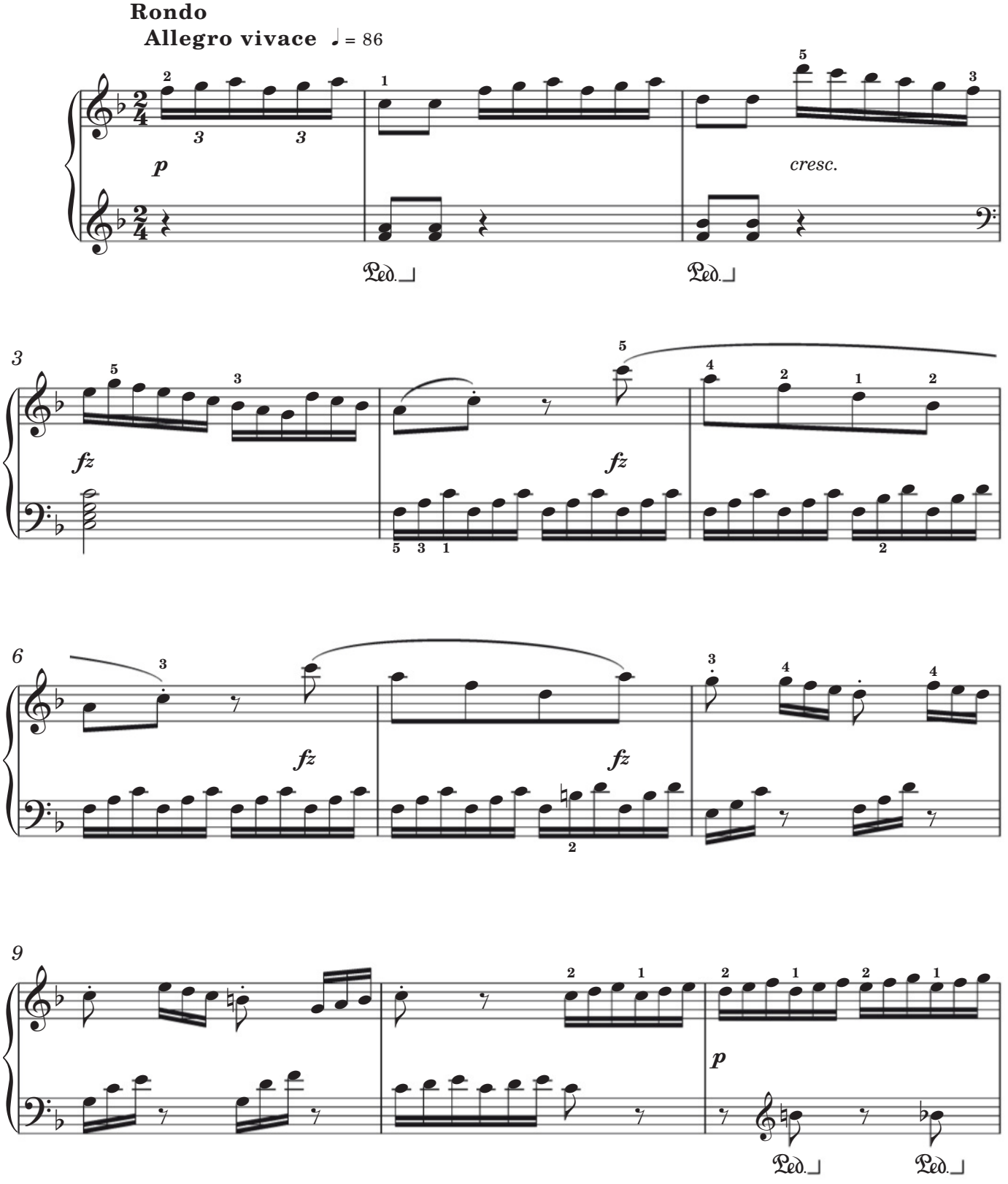
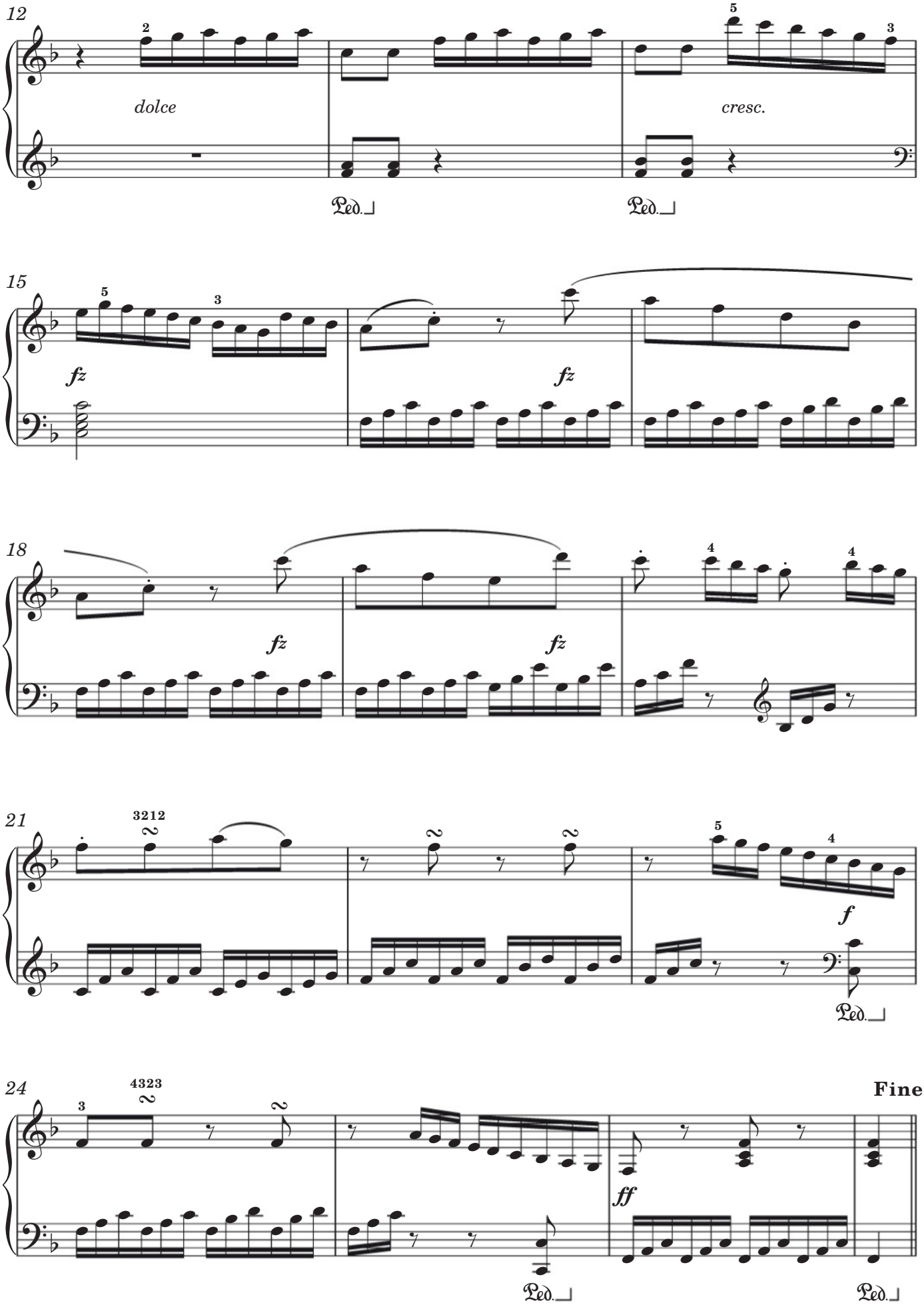
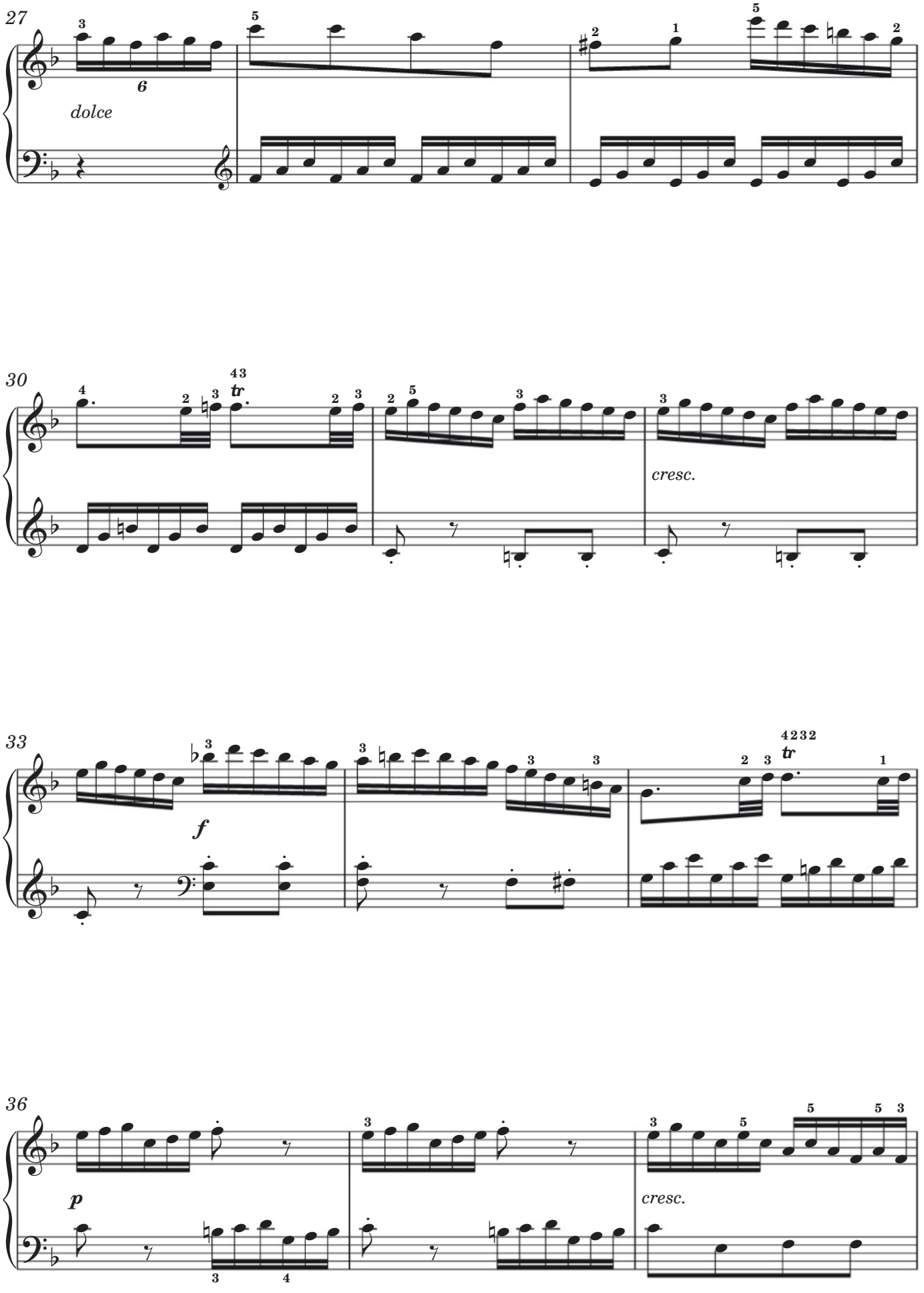
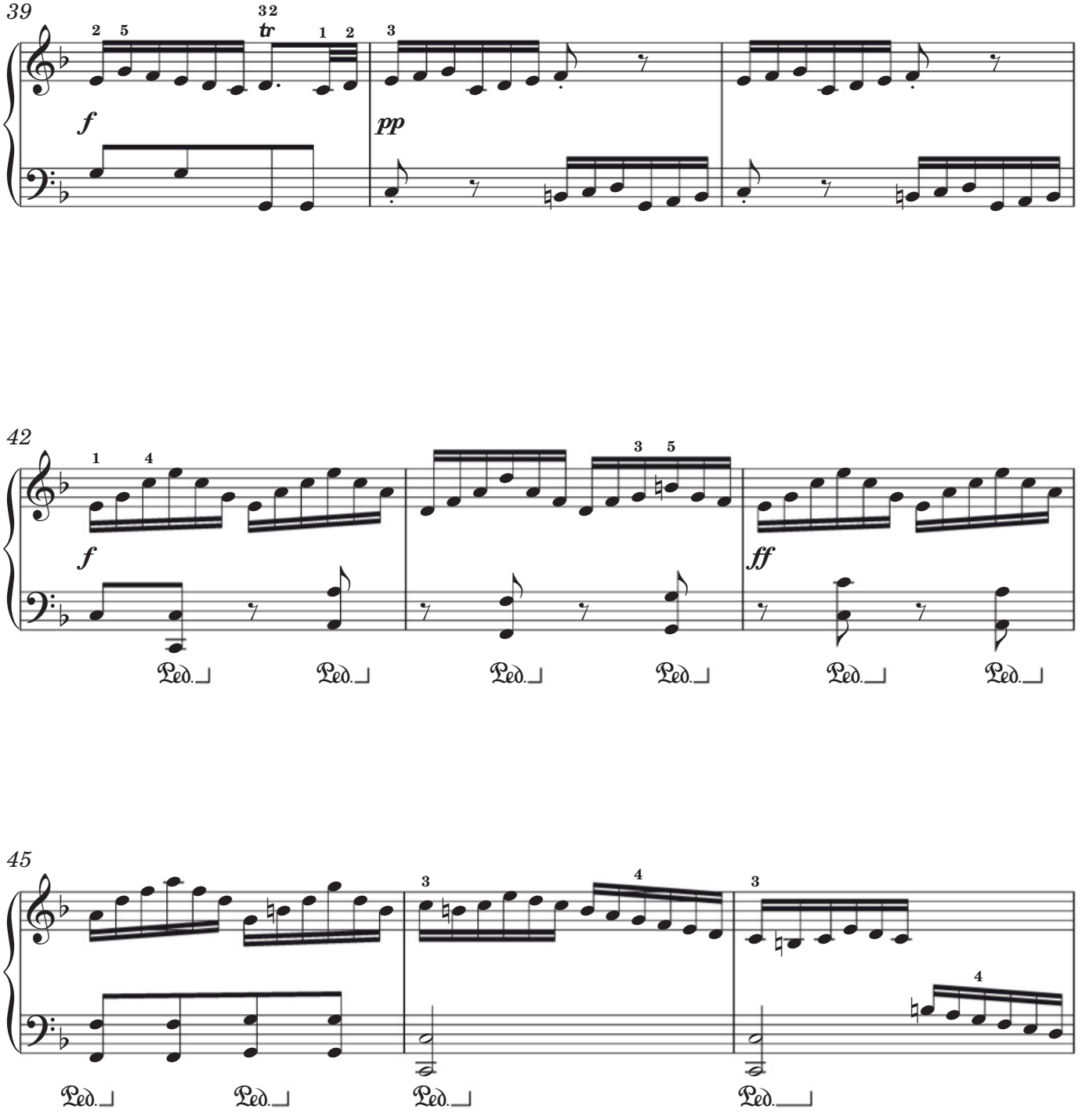
TRACK 10

Muzio CLEMENTI (1752-1832)

Rondo from Sonatina Op 36 No 4

INTERMEDIATE

DON'T MISS NILS FRANKE'S LESSON ON THIS PIECE

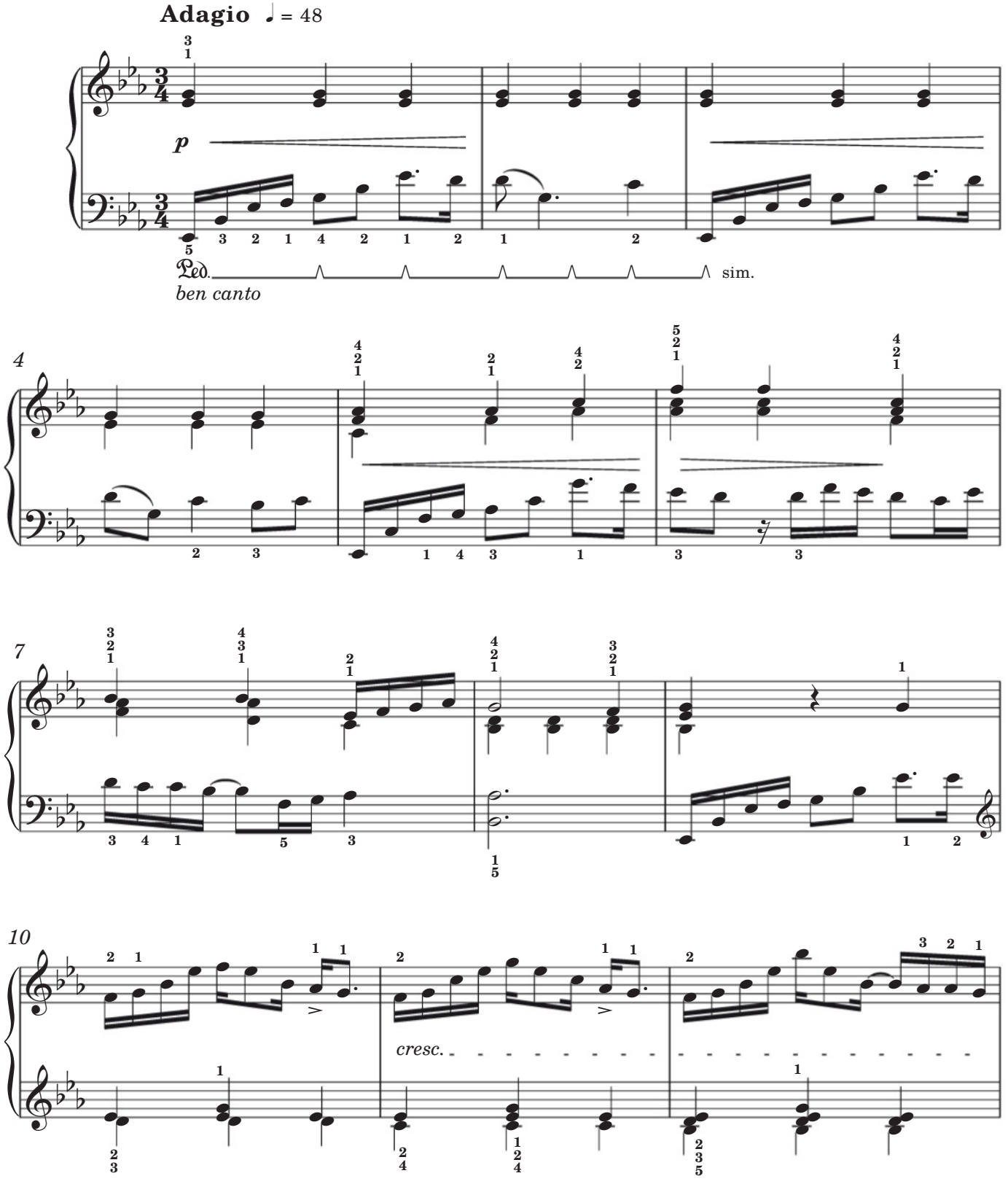
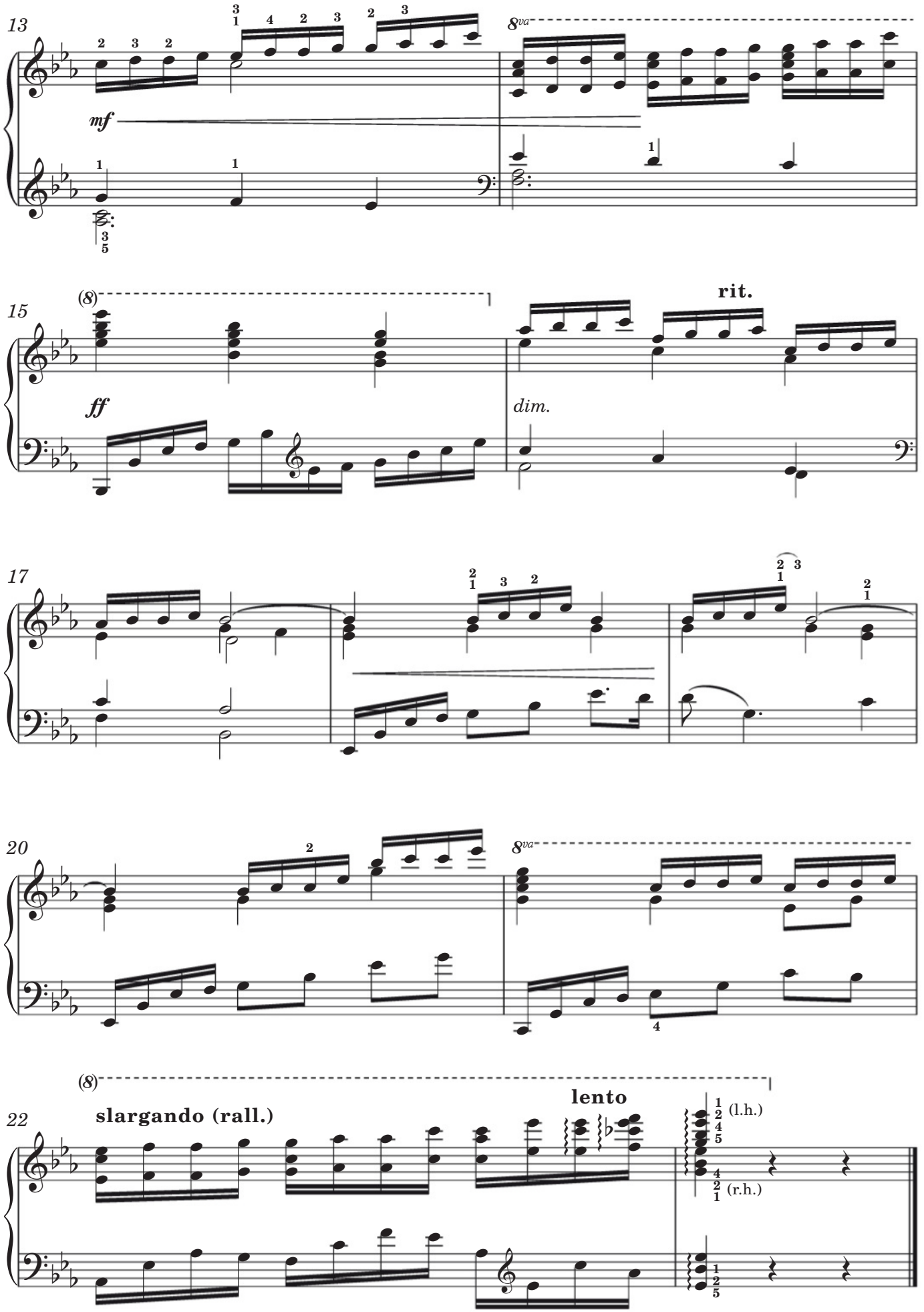
Practised year in and year out by countless beginner pianists around the world, the Opus 36 Sonatinas are Clementi's best-known music. Published in 1797, Clementi called them 'progressive', and the beginner to intermediate-level pupil – for whom they are intended – will encounter increased technical difficulty while moving through the series of six mini sonatas. This last Rondo movement from the No 4 Sonatina contains technical issues right from the outset; notice the semiquaver triplet figures at bar 1 and throughout. These motifs alone, which are to be played swiftly and effortlessly, need to be articulated with perfect evenness. **Read Nils Franke's lesson.**

12
dolce
cresc.
Ped.
Ped.
15
fz
fz
18
fz
fz
21
3212
f
Ped.
24
4323
Fine
ff
Ped.
Ped.

27
dolce
30
tr
cresc.
33
f
tr
36
p
cresc.

Da Capo al Fine

TRACK 11

Mel BONIS (1858-1937)
Prélude Op 10

INTERMEDIATE

The music of French Romantic composer Mel Bonis has received somewhat of a revival to date. *Pianist* has followed suit by featuring three intoxicating pieces inside recent issues: *Méditation* (issue 110), *Phoebé* (issue 121) and *Mélisande* (issue 127). They have all proved popular. This short and exquisite Prélude is of an intermediate level (you can always try sight-reading it through if you feel brave!).

Playing tips: The LH that takes centre stage, as it takes hold of the tender melody which should sing luxuriously and be well-shaped. The RH chords are to remain quieter and in the background. At bar 10 the RH starts to take over, with filigree writing that can feel a little uncomfortable at first – mainly because of the syncopated semiquaver/quaver rhythm. Try to make bars 10-15 one long, gradual build-up, and at bar 14 keep the RH octaves relaxed. Take your time through bar 15, as if almost 'stretching' the length of the bar. Then make a ritardando at bar 16 and find your way back to the opening tempo (if a little slower) at bar 18. Tail off into the distance. *Pedal tips*: See markings on the score.


13
8va
mf
15
(8)
ff
rit.
dim.
17
20
8va
22
(8)
slargando (rall.)
lento
(l.h.)
(r.h.)

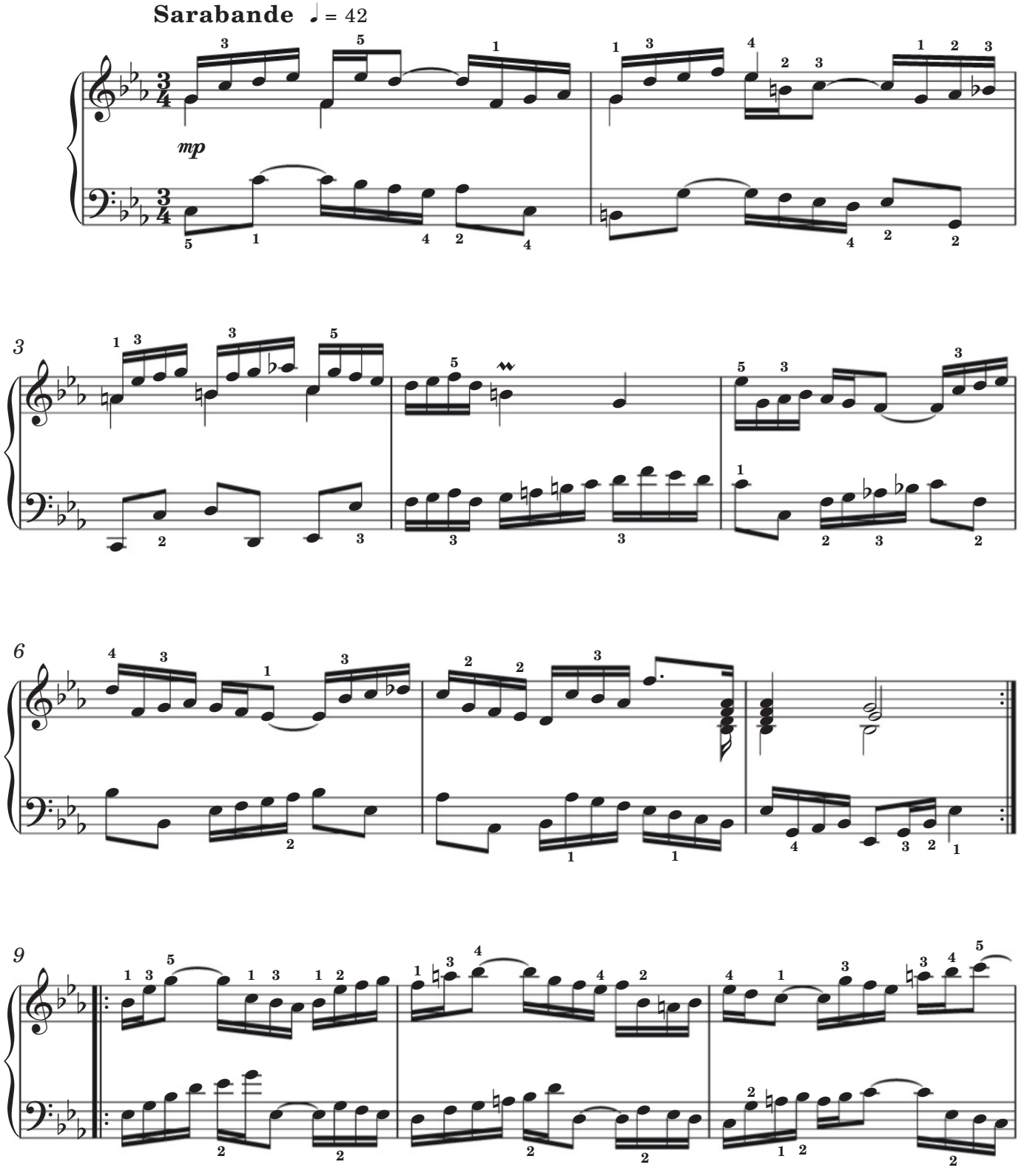
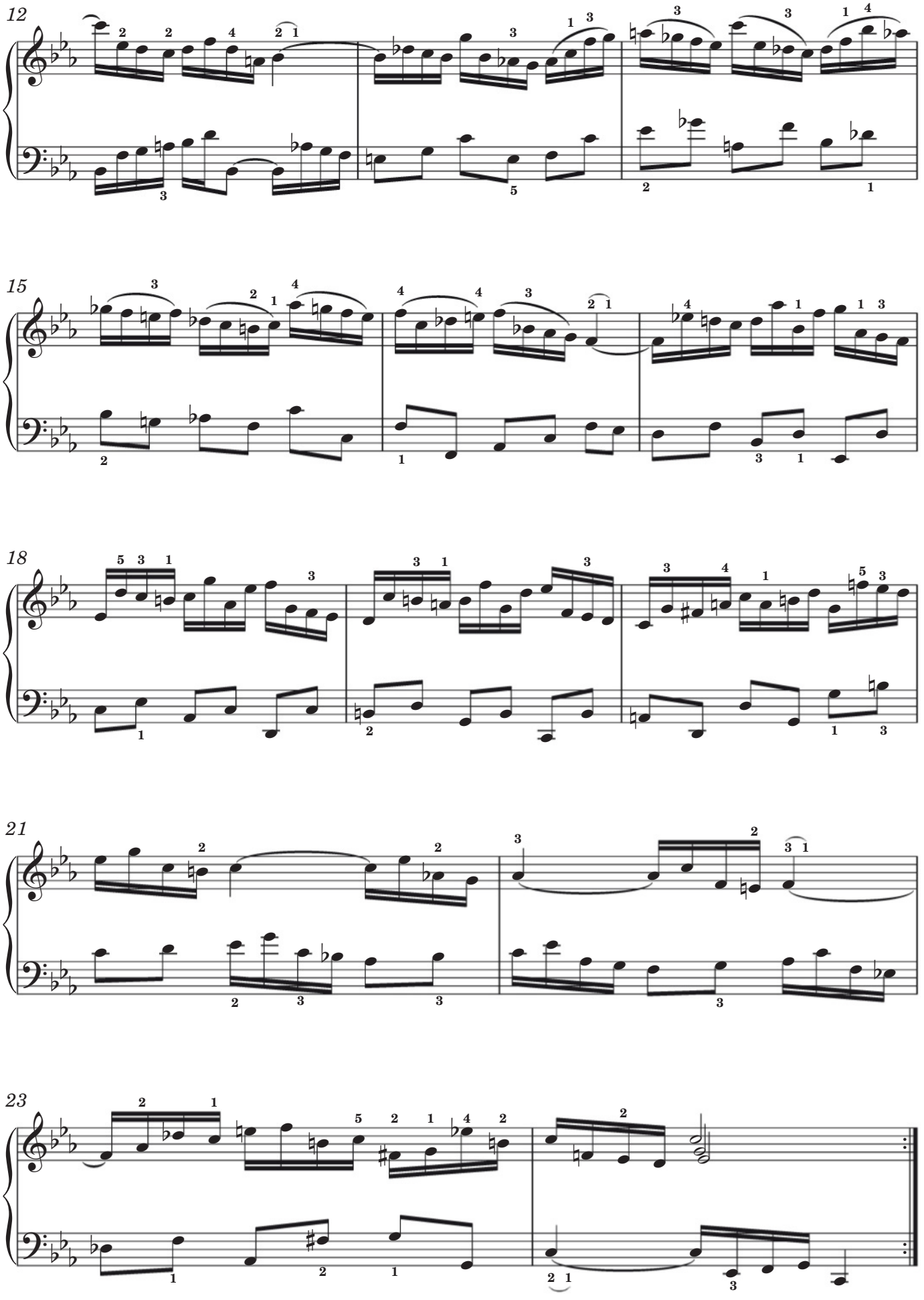
TRACK 12

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Sarabande from Partita No 2 BWV 826

INTERMEDIATE

The Partitas BWV 825-830 are a set of six keyboard suites which were originally published individually beginning in 1726, then together as *Clavier-Übung* 1 in 1731, the first of Bach's works to be published under his own direction. They were among the last of his keyboard suites to be composed, the others being the six English Suites BWV 806-811 and the six French Suites BWV 812-817, as well as the Overture in the French style BWV 831. This expressive Sarabande from Partita No 2 is the fourth of the six-movement work.

Playing tips: Keep the fingers close to the keys, as if they are 'crawling' over them. This will ensure a good, stable legato. Notice the finger substitutions in the RH in bars 12, 16, 22 and in the LH at bar 24; again, this replacing of one finger with another finger on the same note allows for a more successful legato. Players can be free with use of ornamentation (often a more elaborate ornamentation is used on the repeat). There's only one dynamic – the calm *mp* at the start – so use your imagination with the rest. Pedal is not needed.

12
15
18
21
23

TRACK 13

Samuil MAYKAPAR (1867-1938)

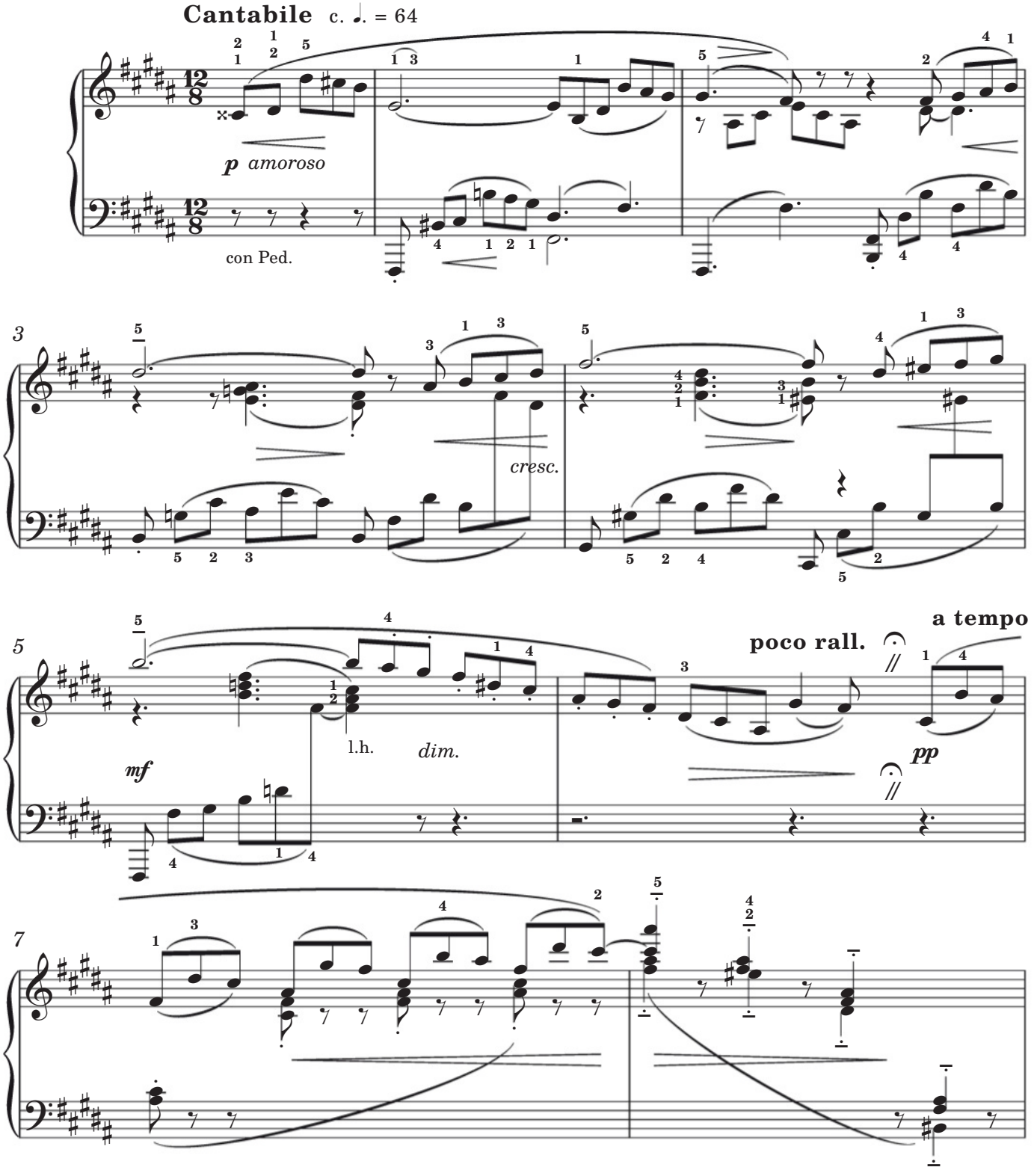
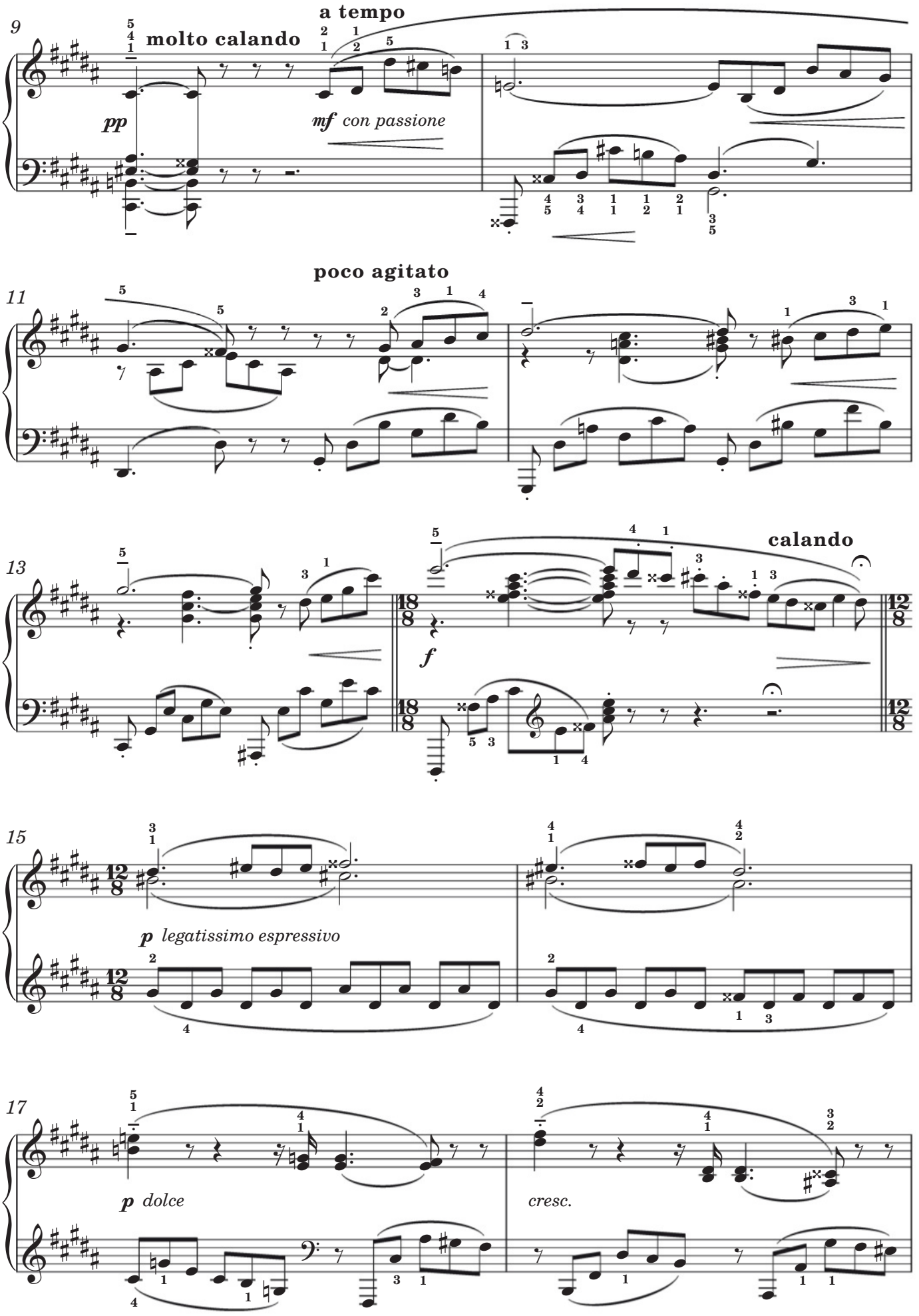
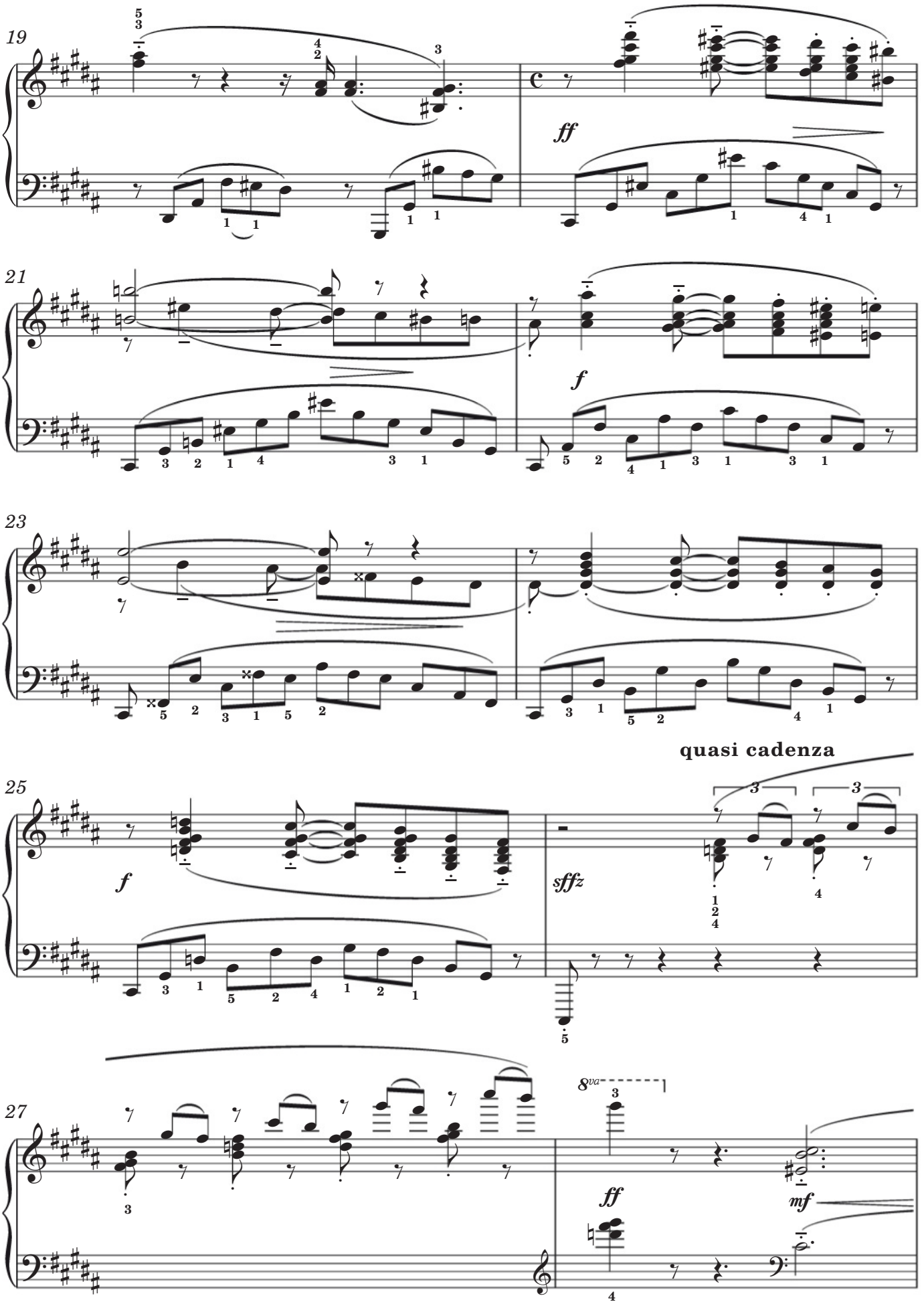
Pensée fugitive Op 11 No 6

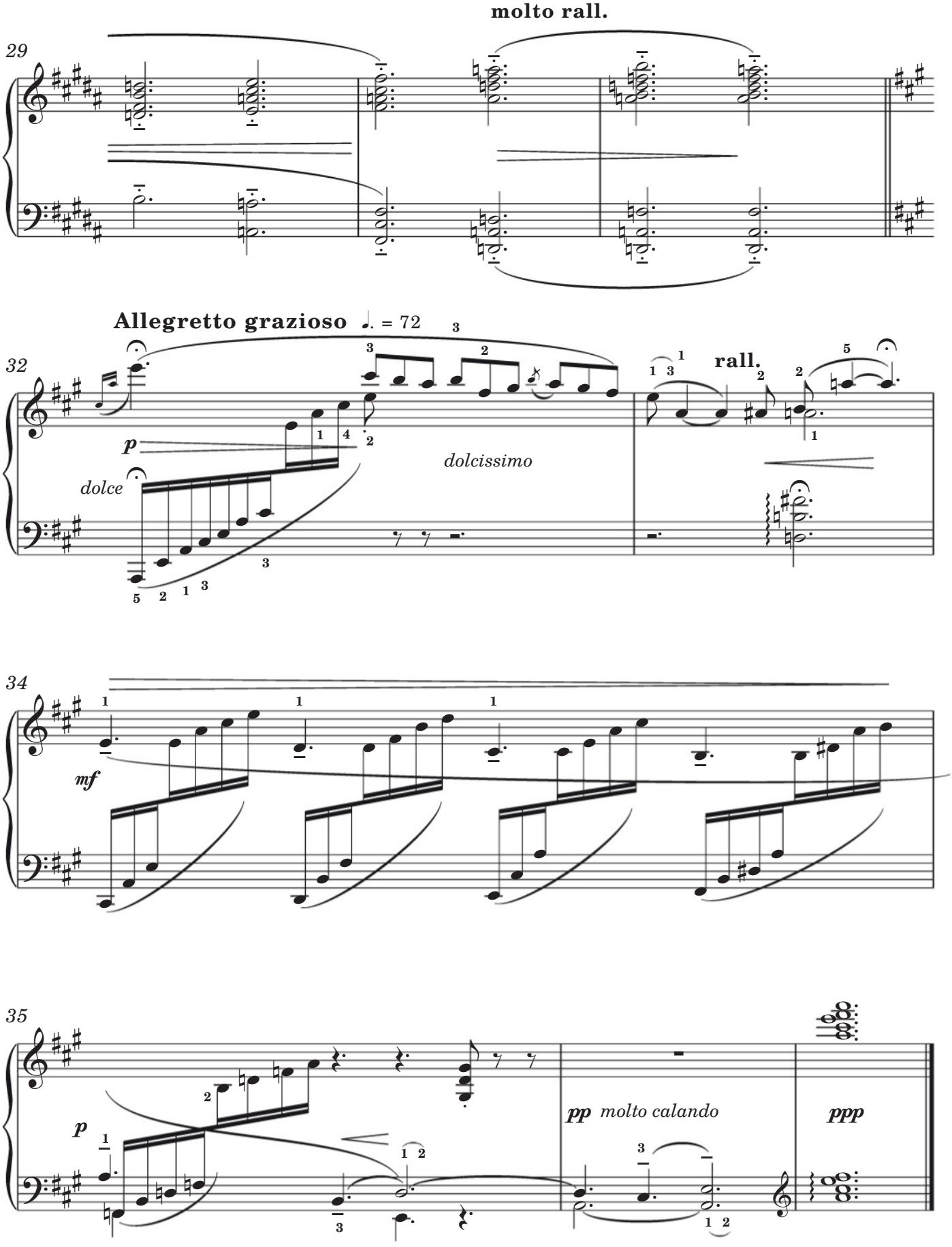
INTERMEDIATE/ ADVANCED

The title *Pensée fugitive* means 'Fleeting thought' and this piece certainly has a delightfully mercurial quality to it. Despite the improvisatory feel, though, a logical thread connects each idea to the next.

Some playing tips from Matthew Mills: Enjoy the little exchanges between the hands, like relaxed, friendly conversation. Aim for a generous, warm sound throughout. Although the movement calls for an expressive freedom, in such a brief piece extreme tempo fluctuations risk making it sound incoherent. Enjoy the flow of thoughts, but don't get lost in them! Pedal can be used liberally throughout: changing every half-bar is a good place to start, adjusting as clarity requires.

A note about fingering: On the score we offer two choices for the first two RH notes (2-1 or 1-2). We've done the same at bars 9-10 (notice the LH choices in bar 10 especially). Hand shapes, spans and finger lengths differ from one person to the next, so you should try out all different ways before choosing the fingering that best suits your hands and fingers.

Read Matthew Mills' article on Maykapar inside this issue.

9
molto calando
a tempo
pp
mf con passione
11
poco agitato
13
calando
f
15
p legatissimo espressivo
17
p dolce
cresc.

19
ff
21
f
23
quasi cadenza
25
f
sffz
27
8va
ff
mf


molto rall.
29
Allegretto grazioso ♩. = 72
32
p
dolce
dolcissimo
rall.
34
mf
35
p
pp molto calando
ppp

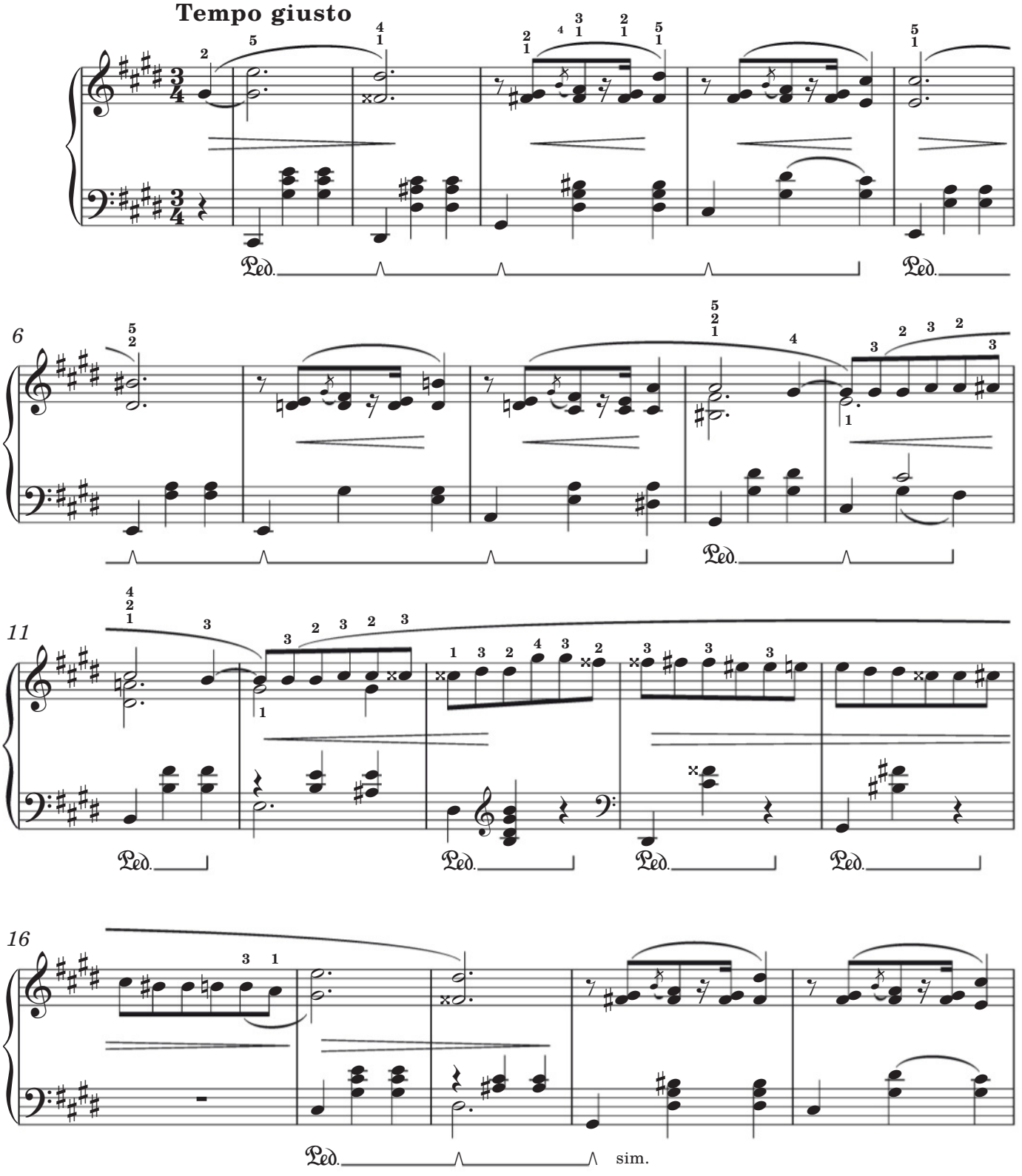
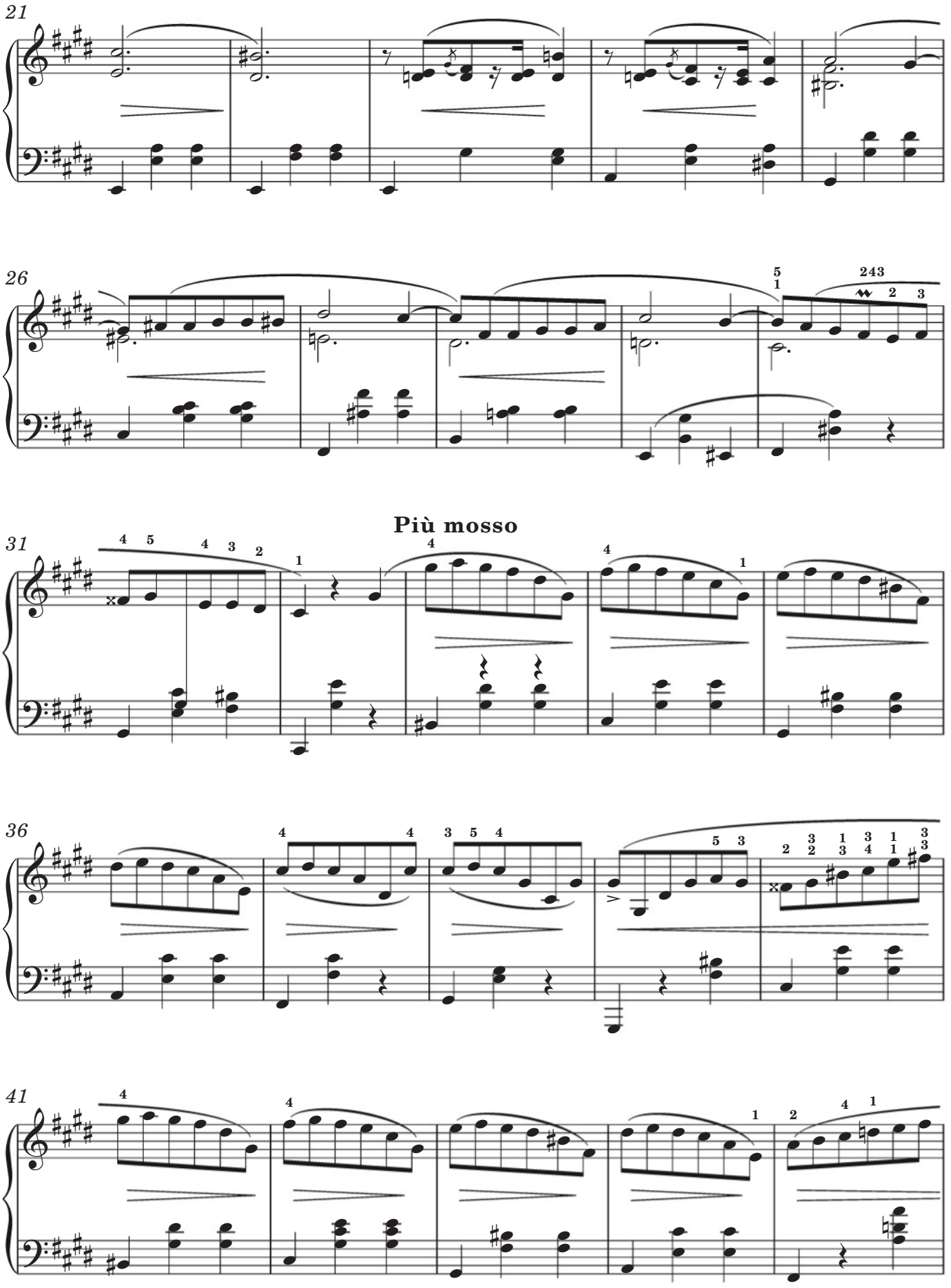
TRACK 14

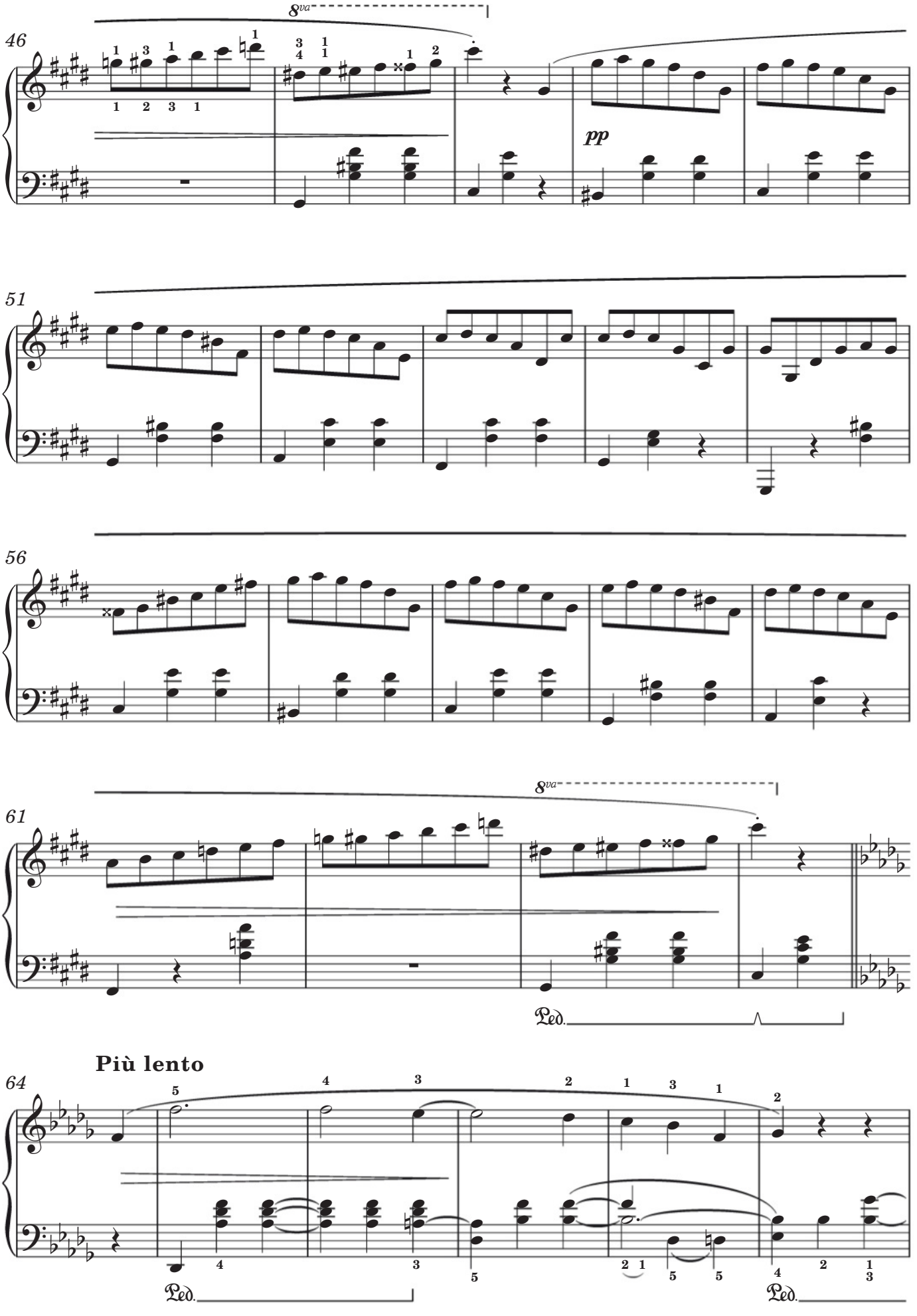
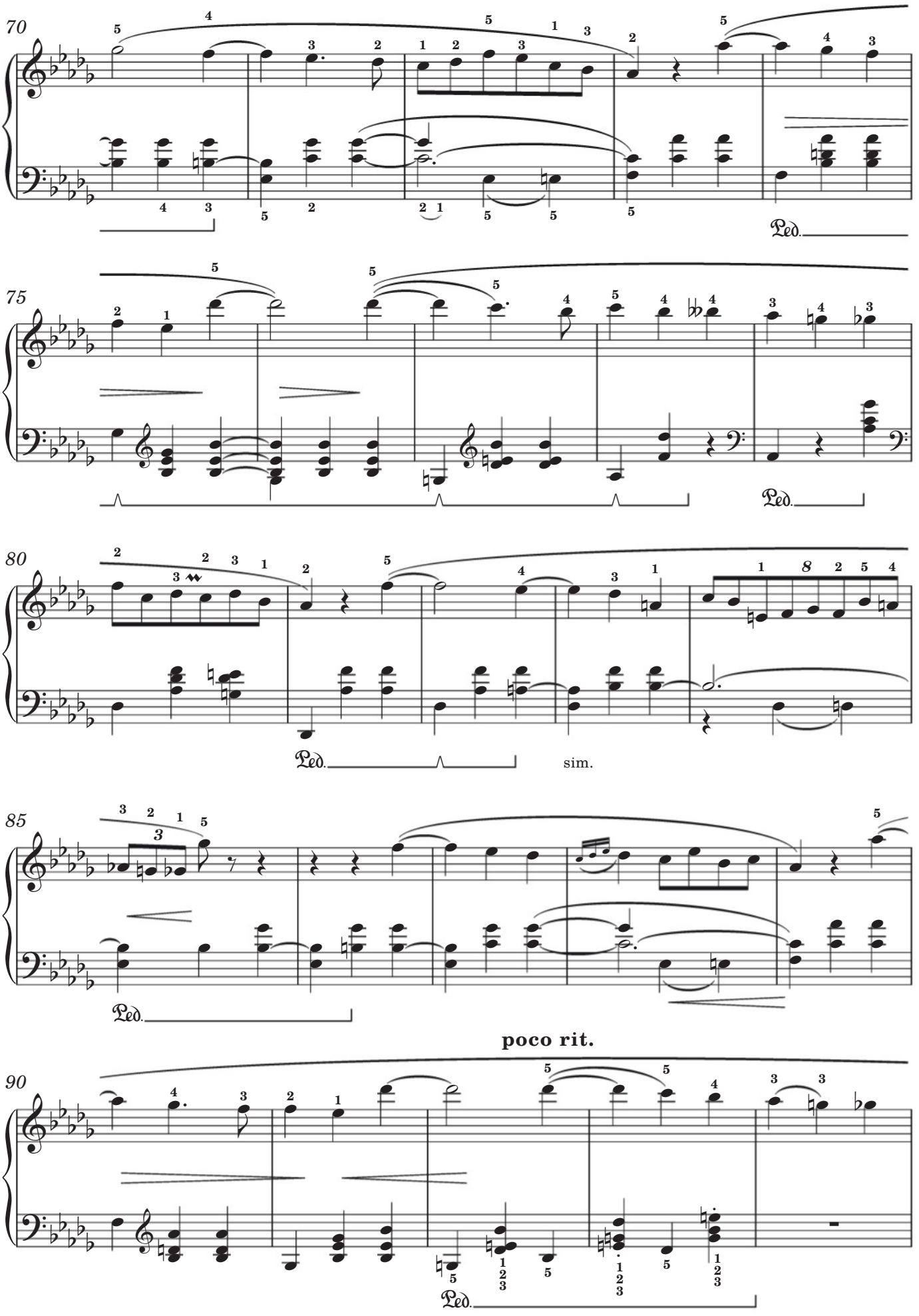
Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)

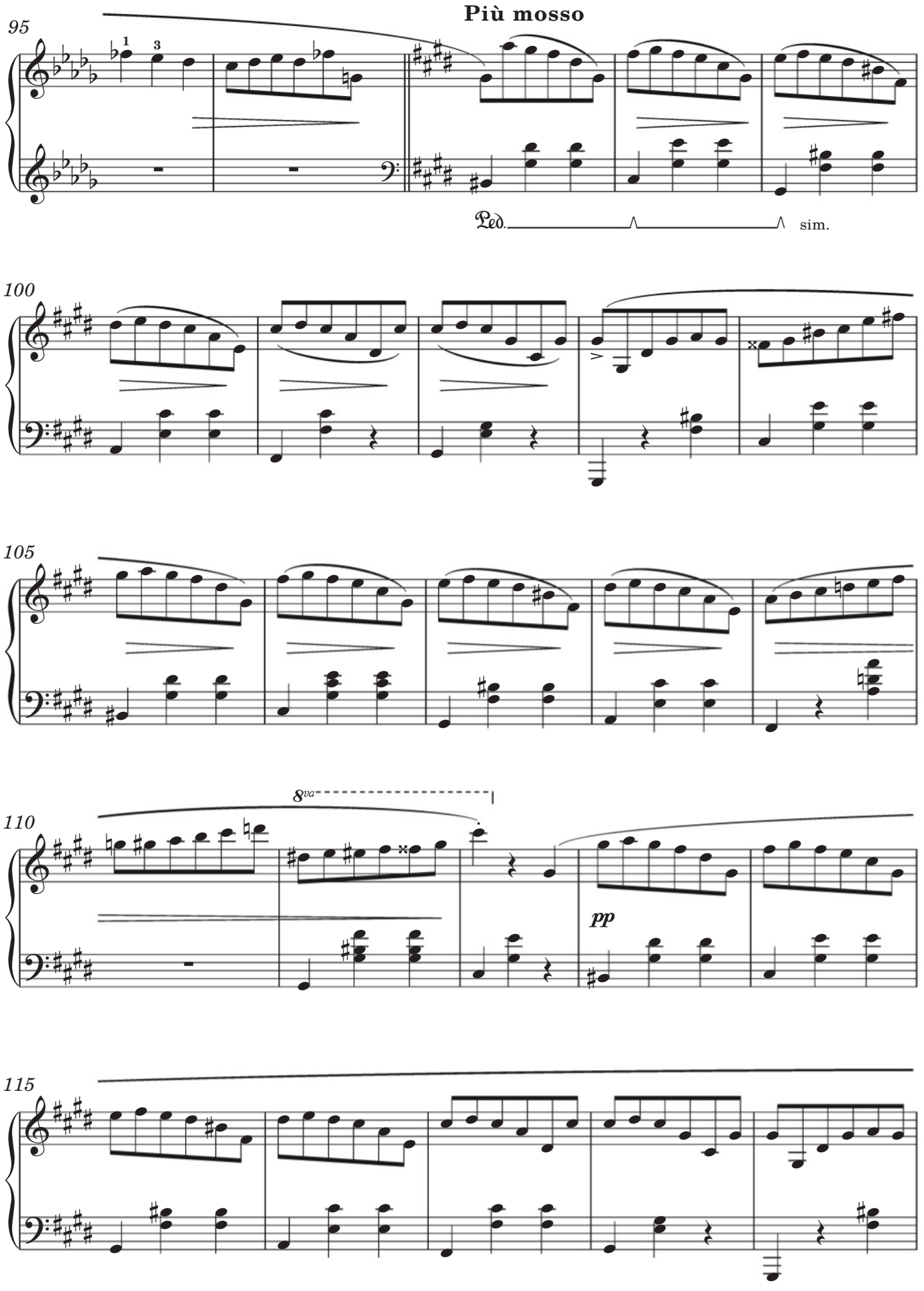
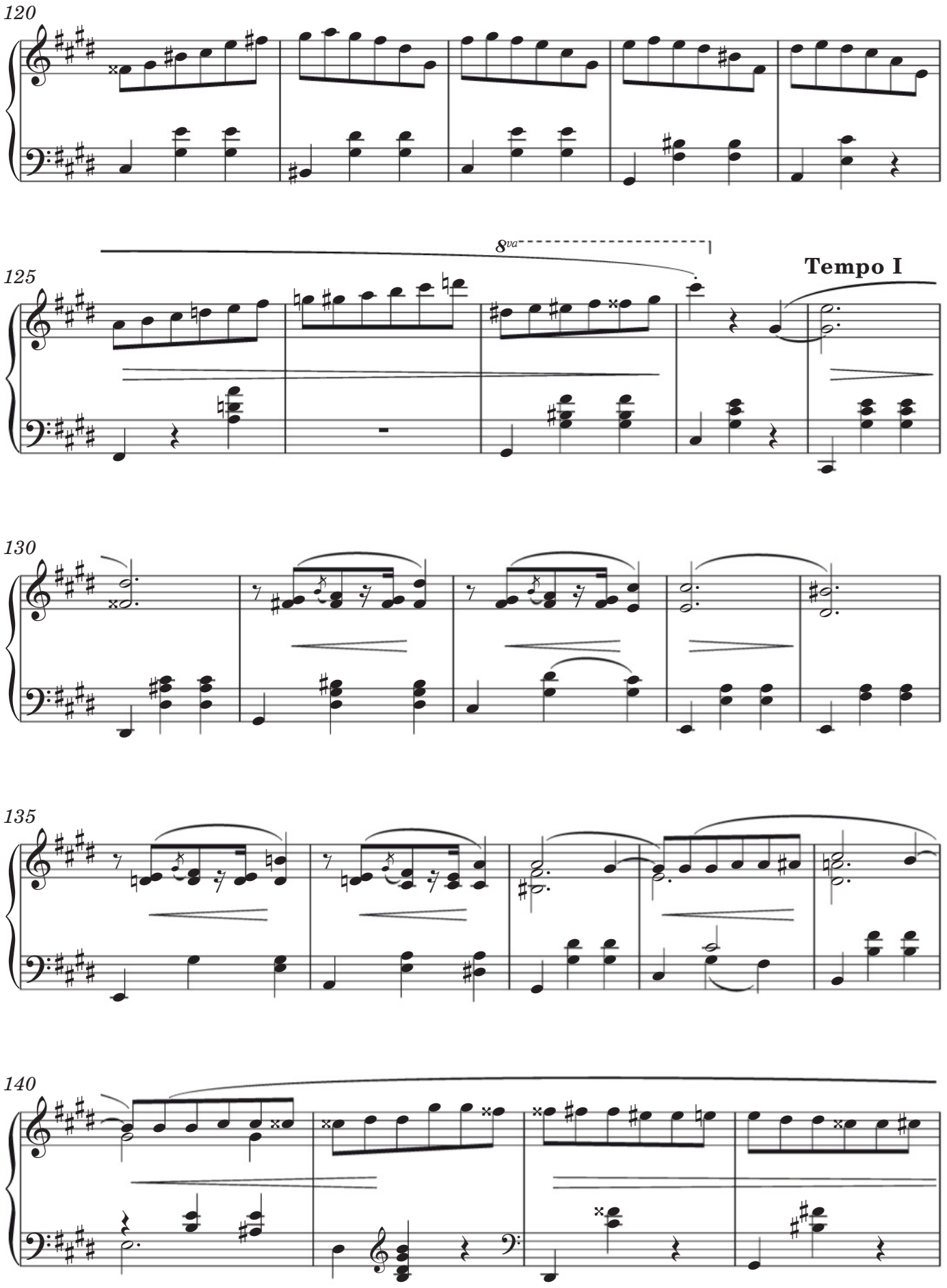
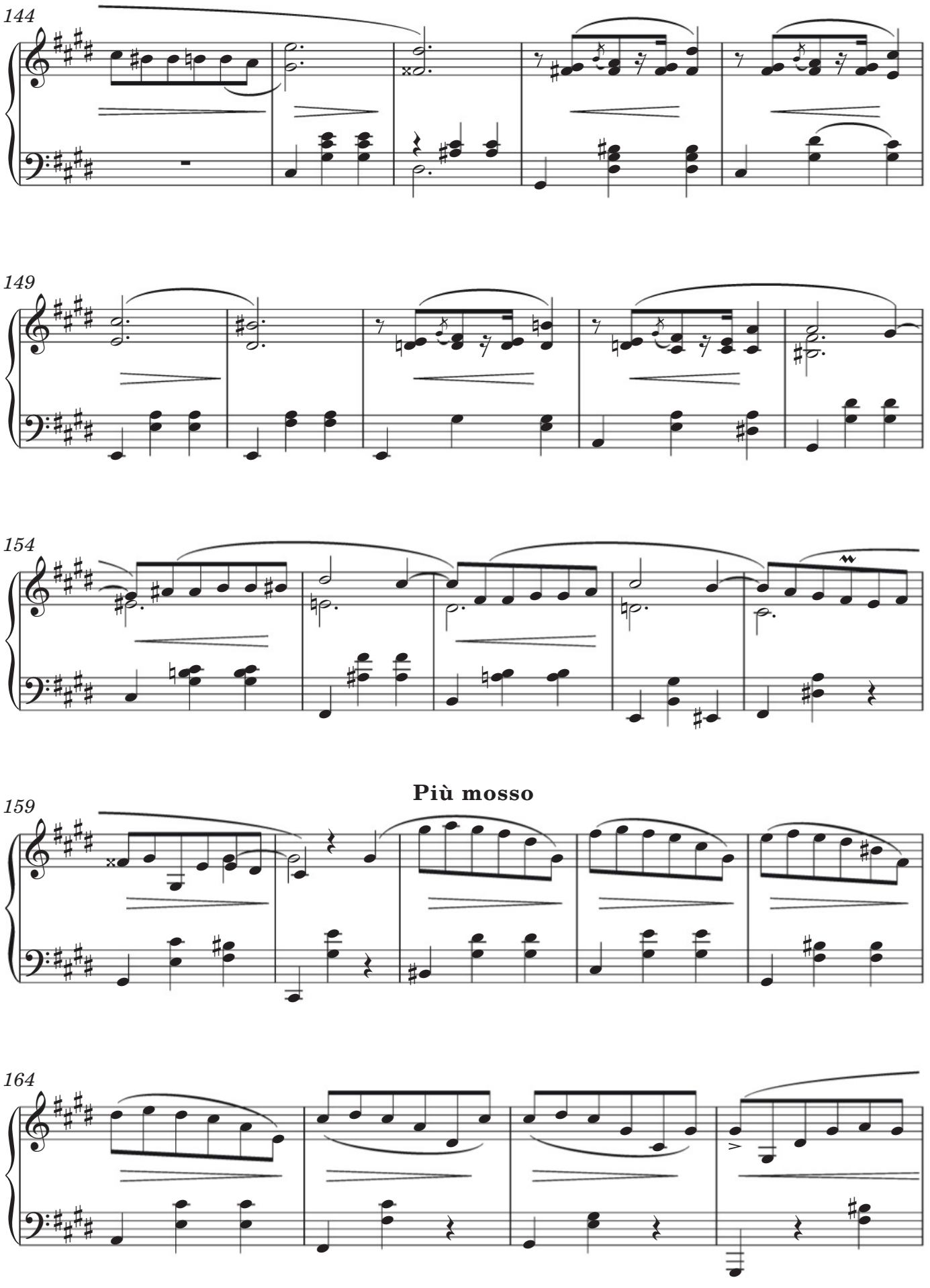
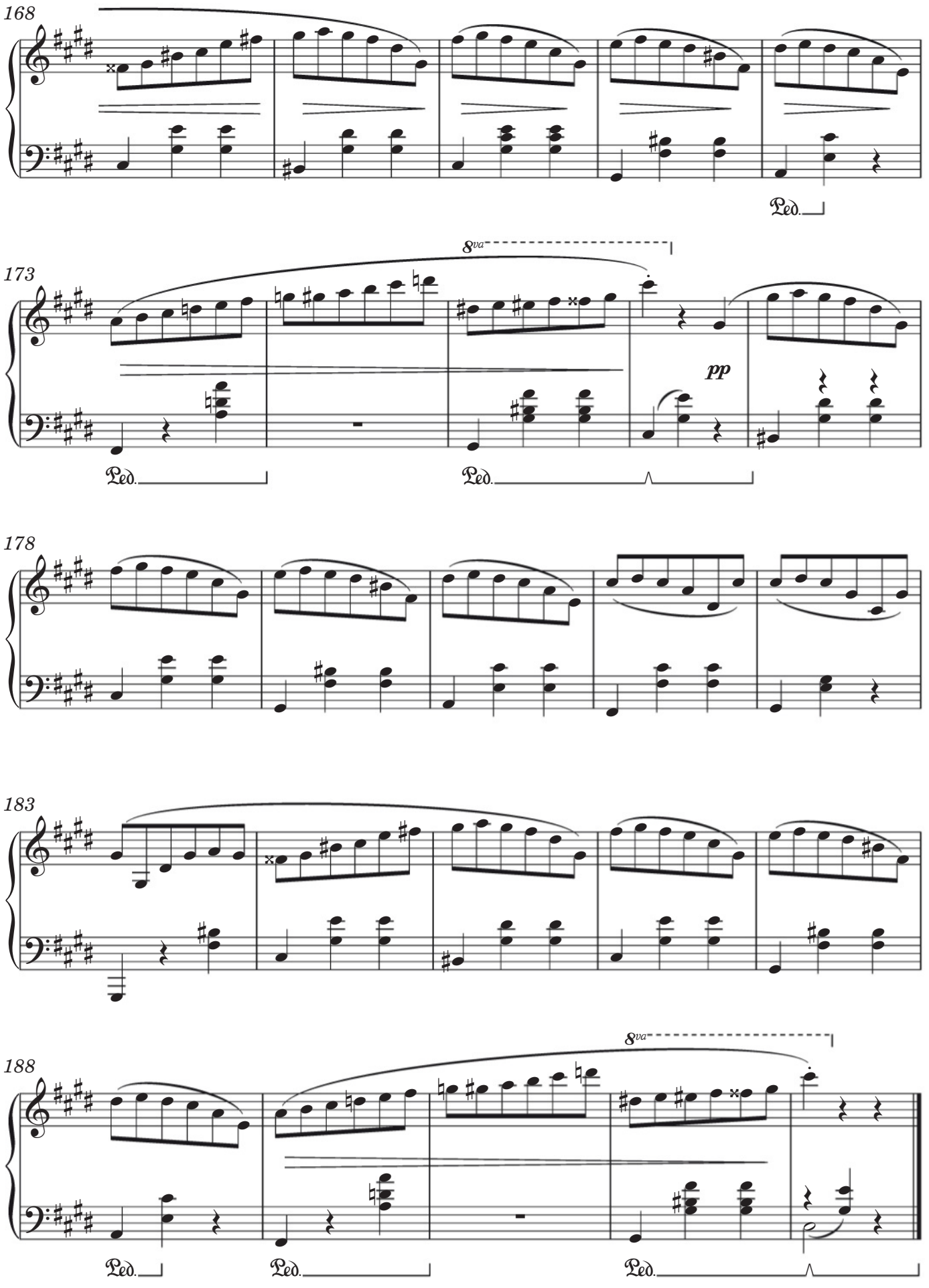
Waltz in C sharp minor Op 64 No 2

ADVANCED

DON'T MISS GARETH OWEN'S LESSON ON THIS PIECE

Chopin's Waltz Op 64 No 2 is not as famous as the piece which precedes it – the 'Minute' Waltz Op 64 No 1 – but it is still popular. The form is a dance with trio, but Chopin enriches the simple ternary form in a unique way: the themes are followed by a 'ritornello' of whirling eighth notes. In the *Più lento* section at bar 64, the key changes to the more optimistic key of D flat major but, in general, there is a certain melancholy feel to this Waltz (it could be interesting to note that Beethoven used the same key of C sharp minor for his mysterious and often tragic-sounding 'Moonlight' Sonata). **Lucy Parham plays the Waltz Op 64 No 2 on this issue's album. Read Gareth Owen's lesson inside this issue.**

21
26
Più mosso
31
36
41


8va
46
pp
51
56
61
8va
Ped.
Più lento
64
Ped.
Ped.

70
Ped.
75
Ped.
80
Ped.
sim.
85
Ped.
poco rit.
90
Ped.


Più mosso
95
Ped.
sim.
100
105
8va
110
pp
115

120
125
8va
Tempo I
130
135
140

144
149
154
Più mosso
159
164

168
Ped.
173
8va
pp
Ped.
Ped.
178
183
188
8va
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

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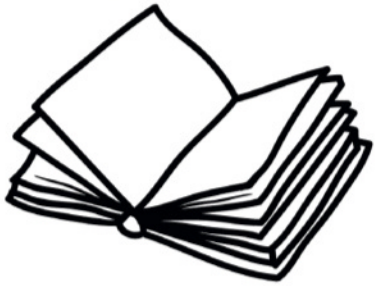

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PIANO TEACHER HELP DESK

Does no music mean no lesson?

What do you do when your student arrives empty-handed? Don't send them packing, says **Kathryn Page**, who has a plethora of ideas up her sleeve

When a pupil turns up for a lesson with no music, is it possible to work with them on their set repertoire? Understandably if this happens our reaction may be to immediately say 'no' – and abandon the lesson. But let's take a step back and reflect. Music can be approached from many different angles. Unpredictable events that upset our lesson plans need not lead to disaster. We can always adjust and realign our approach. Here are some strategies for the music-less piano lesson.

Firstly, have an iPad at the ready. I recommend that every teacher who has one ensures that it contains as much of their students' repertoire on it as possible. Keep updating your emergency supplies regularly! But I would not go as far as to mark on scores particular fingerings or markings for individual students. Quite the reverse: If a student appears without their music then pristine, unmarked copies of their scores could prove extremely beneficial for learning and revision. Go through the music they have been working on with the 'blank canvas' on your iPad. It may be hard for a student to cope without pencil marks on scores. Ask your student to remember as much as possible about the previous lesson(s) on their pieces. Ask them to mark in again some of the fingering in challenging places. Can your student remember things you wrote down on their scores? Are there any additional markings that need adding today? What is no longer necessary to remain written down? Take a Plato-like approach as you teach, using lots of questions. Shift the emphasis away from a teacher led session towards more assertiveness and suggestions from the student.

But even if you do not possess an iPad, all is not lost in music-less lessons. It is always refreshing to experiment with music away from the printed page. Ask your student to take an armchair conductor's perspective on their pieces. Can your pupil show the tempo, character, and flow of the music via hand and arm gestures? Arm movements lead naturally into whole body evocations that can be so empowering in terms of helping a musician to really project and feel the rhythmic character of a composition. Get into the spirit via dance. Once this is achieved turn your teaching session into a vocal lesson! Ask for all the melodic lines to be sung to *la*. Make up words for phrases that enhance the natural shape of the line. How do you manage breath control so that it tallies with the desired sense of line?

Wildest imagination

Singing alone could take up a whole lesson, but there are many more approaches that can be taken for a lesson with no music. Ask students to play as much of their repertoire from memory as they can. Can they write out the first bars of each piece? If they stop after a few bars or notes, use the material they did remember as a springboard for patterns/sequences that could lead to an extended improvisation. Move onto mental practising: How much of a piece is solidly internalised? Is it possible to 'play' at least part of their repertoire in their heads away from the piano? Can they imagine a story, picture, scent or feel for the music they are playing? What other instruments could the music be arranged for? What would be inappropriate in terms of instrumentation and why?

Ask students to play as much of their repertoire from memory as they can

Move the lesson forward by working at general aural challenges. Can your student sing their pieces in the correct key? If not ask them to go to the piano and see how near or far away from the correct key they were. Use set repertoire as a clapping exercise. Is it possible to keep clapping in improvisatory mode if the actual written rhythms of a piece cannot be recalled?

Sessions with no music are not advisable on a regular basis, but when they occur, take heart and keep positive. You could conclude a score-free lesson with some listening via YouTube or Spotify. Allow the pupil to reflect on what is being heard. Ask them to choose then justify with clarity which versions of their set repertoire they preferred to hear. ■

Kathryn Page has appeared in concert and on television as a soloist and in chamber music. She is a teacher, adjudicator and administrator for Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists.

© Helen Tabor Photography

Who was SAMUIL MAYKAPAR?

Samuil Maykapar's music is so much more than the easy pieces he penned for the beginner-level pianist: Somewhat underrated today, he lived through many epic moments in history and produced some equally monumental works, as **Matthew Mills** explains

On 18 December 1867, in Kherson (now in Ukraine), Samuil Moiseevich Maykapar was born into a Karaite Jewish family. The archaeologist and scholar Abraham ben Samuel Firkovich (1786-1874) had demonstrated to the Tsar's satisfaction that the Karaite community had been exiled and settled in Crimea well before the common era and could not therefore be held responsible for Jesus's crucifixion; Karaites were thus exempted from the oppressive legal restrictions to which Rabbinic Jews were subjected.

Maykapar's father, Moses Samuilovitch, a successful merchant, moved his family to the Russian port town of Taganrog shortly after Samuil's birth. There, the six-year-old Samuil began music lessons with Gaetano Molla (1845-1894), who had moved from Milan to Taganrog in 1870, taking over the town's Italian opera company, and greatly improving many aspects of the town's musical life.

The foment of Russian musical life at this time cannot be underestimated. For centuries the Orthodox Church had prohibited secular music making. It was not until the 1720s, during the reign of Peter the Great – who saw Western culture as a means and marker of civilisation – that European musicians were imported to compensate for the lack of a local Russian tradition, and as the St Petersburg court's European fashions became *de rigueur* throughout the Russian nobility, Western musical styles flourished too.

This resulted in something of a cultural crisis for creative artists. Many Russian musicians felt a keen need to develop a national musical identity, rather than simply borrowing Western Europe's. The founding, by the brothers Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein, of the conservatories in St Petersburg and Moscow, in 1862 and 1866 respectively, was hugely significant in this regard. Until then, as exemplified by Maykapar's studies with Molla, Russians could only train in music by engaging the services of a private tutor (whose quality could, of course, vary enormously) or by travelling abroad. Both options excluded those without sufficient financial means; it is of little surprise that most of this generation of Russian musicians, writers, and artists belonged to the aristocratic, noble, or mercantile classes.

By contrast, the so-called 'Mighty Five' group of composers guided by Mily Balakirev, were all self-taught amateurs. By profession César Cui was an army engineer, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov a naval officer, Alexander Borodin a chemist, and Modest Mussorgsky was a civil servant (at least on a part-time basis, as his preferred occupation of vodka gourmet allowed!). The Five were suspicious of socially elite, Westernised, academy-trained composers like Tchaikovsky (who was one of the first students to enrol at St Petersburg). They sought to preserve native culture from the influence of Western ideas, to reflect rural Russian life authentically, and thereby to foster pride in national identity. They held the operas of the slightly senior Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857) as a model, even though, as a wealthy noble who studied privately with John Field, he exemplified the social origins they resented.

Truth be told, Glinka borrowed folk styles as a means of

The 'Mighty Five': Mily Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov'

differentiating the peasant characters in his operas from the nobles, rather than incorporating those styles wholesale into his musical language. Nevertheless, Glinka's distinctly Russian subject-matter strongly influenced his countrymen's music from the latter half of the 19th century, not just in the work of The Five, but also Tchaikovsky's operas based on Pushkin, for instance, or the early works of Stravinsky, particularly, of course, *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*, the three scores written for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes—at the time Russia's most famous cultural export, despite actually having been founded in Paris and never once visiting Russia!

Mixing with all types

Against this background, in 1885, Maykapar began parallel studies in music at St Petersburg Conservatory, and law at St Petersburg University – the latter, as he put it, 'with the sole intention of broadening my intellectual horizons and enriching my general education'. He graduated from the Conservatory in 1893 (two years after completing his law degree), then, on Anton Rubinstein's advice, continued his piano studies in Vienna with the legendary Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915). His fellow students included Mark Hambourg, Isabelle Vengerova, and a teenaged Artur Schnabel. During this period, Maykapar composed his *Variations on an original theme* Op 2, and Three Preludes Op 3, which he played for Leschetizky.

Maykapar left Austria for Moscow in 1898. There, while regularly returning to St Petersburg to perform, he served as secretary to the Moscow Musical Scientific Circle founded by Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915). Taneyev, a former student of Tchaikovsky, was professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory, where his students included Glière, Medtner, Rachmaninov, and Scriabin. Taneyev was a real renaissance man of cosmopolitan outlook whose scientific approach to musical study resulted in an enormous treatise, Convertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style, the fruit of two decades' work on the music of, amongst others, Palestrina, Ockeghem, and Bach. Maykapar shared this thorough, systematic outlook, which is reflected in his own work *The Musical Ear: its meaning, nature, characteristics, method, and proper development*, published in 1900. His piano works *Eight Miniatures* Op 4, *Lyrical Variations* Op 5, and *Suite in the Classical Style* Op 6, also date from this period, and surviving programme booklets confirm that Maykapar regularly included them in his own recitals.

Samuil Maykapar encountered musicians of many different nationalities during his formative years, and experienced both centres of 19th-century Russian musical and intellectual life, which naturally coalesced around the professors and students of the new conservatories. Of the Rubinstein brothers, Nikolai was the more sympathetic to the progressive ideas and nationalist tenets of The Five. Maykapar's own teacher at St Petersburg, Nikolai Solovyov (1846-1916) was indeed rather hostile towards the so-called New Russian School. Bearing in mind his contact with Taneyev, his studies with Molla and Leschetitsky, and his frequent travels, it's perhaps unsurprising that Maykapar's works draw less on Russian nationalist themes than many of his contemporaries.

Teaching, touring and lots of writing

Whether inspired by Molla's example, or simply because at the time the creation of a national system of musical training was ▶

Playing MAYKAPAR

Maykapar's greatest musical legacy is the large body of work for pianists at beginner and intermediate levels, which combine technical feasibility, compositional mastery, and imaginative Romantic sensibility. His concert works have been eclipsed by those of some of his contemporaries; although not as technically demanding, their neglect cannot be justified on musical grounds. While he often explores bold chromatic territory, Maykapar's harmonic vocabulary is tonal, his melodic gift is considerable, and his writing is always pianistic. His shorter concert works have an evanescent, improvisatory quality; his more extensive movements reveal an inventive developmental instinct and a secure grasp of architecture. Maykapar's diverse professional activities resulted in relatively few works, but each of them is intelligently crafted, captivating, and rewarding for performers and listeners alike.

His educational works are characterised by strophic forms; a typical strategy is to round off a binary form, comprising two parts of even length, with a truncated reprise of the first section. Unlike his more adventurous concert works, his sonatinas tend to exemplify Classical formal principles. Textures tend to be light – a melody and broken-chord accompaniment, for instance – and are often imitative, meaning that both hands develop equally. Maykapar is fastidious about marking fingering, often because his educational music is based around 'fragments' of scales (but rarely in the form encountered in conventional exercises) and he wants to ensure maximum technical benefit. Although he considers young pianists' smaller hands – *Biriulki*, for instance, doesn't contain a single octave – Maykapar expects deft movement around the full range of the keyboard. His colouristic use of extreme high and low registers is both effective and quite exceptional in beginner repertoire – not to mention great fun! According to Maykapar, ledger lines are not reserved for grown-ups!

One of Maykapar's main compositional concerns is for creating coherence across a cycle of movements. *Biriulki* and the Op 33 *Miniatures* are both organised sequentially around the circle of fifths. Amongst the concert works, in both sets of *Pensées fugitives* the final movement closes with a recollection of the opening movement; each movement of the second set are marked to be played continuously. The *Poème en six stophes* expands this principle: the sections are to be played without breaks, and material from one section bleeds into another, where it is developed and expanded.

From a technical perspective, broken chords, arpeggios, double notes (particularly thirds), chords, hand-crossing, and pedalling, are all introduced early – but in musically appropriate and effective contexts, rather than arbitrarily, which justifies the effort required to rise to the challenges that Maykapar sets.

St Petersburg Conservatory circa 1913; Maykapar's influential teacher, the great Theodor Leschetizky

a project of imperative significance, education became a central concern of Maykapar's career. In 1901 he founded a music school in Tver, a city about a hundred miles north of Moscow, where he also taught a piano class. It was at this point that Maykapar began to compose the children's and educational works for which he is usually remembered today.

Maykapar moved to Leipzig in 1903, where he continued to compose, play, and teach. Until the outbreak of the First World War he and his first wife, the soprano Sofia Emmanuilovna Isakovich, who performed under the stage name Nina Ormelli (and happened, somewhat sensationally, to be the first Russian woman to fly in an aeroplane) gave tours of Germany, Austria and France. His second wife – Karaite Judaism permits polygyny, subject to the first wife's approval – was the violinist Elizaveta Aronovna Totesh. The *Poème* Op 17 is dedicated to her. Maykapar's few works not exclusively for piano are for voice and piano or violin and piano.

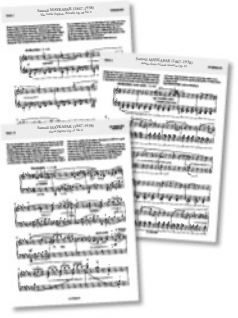
In 1910 Alexander Glazunov invited him to become a professor of piano at St Petersburg, in which post he served until 1930. His concert works *Deux rêveries* Op 10, the first set of *Pensées fugitives* Op 11, the *Variations phantasques* Op 12, *Poème* Op 17, the *Barcarolle* Op 18 and his only Piano Sonata Op 19 were all published between 1912 and 1914, although it seems reasonable to assume that many of them were composed earlier. He continued to perform, regularly including these works in his programmes. In 1927, to mark the centenary of Beethoven's death, he published a large essay, 'The Significance of Beethoven's Work for Our Modern Times', and performed the cycle of 32 sonatas over seven evenings, an innovation in concert life at the time.

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky; Brothers Nikolai and Anton Rubinstein

A place in history

In 1918 Lenin issued a decree nationalising the Russian music publishing industry. Incorporating the catalogues of Jurgenson, Belaieff, and Gutheil, the Gosudarstvennoye Muzykal'noye Izdatelstvo – the State Music Publishing House – was known by the acronym Gosmuzizdat, and then from 1930 as Muzgiz. Although many of Maykapar's earlier works were published in Leipzig or Berlin, everything after the Piano Sonata was first published by Muzgiz, with a handful of exceptions. His *Pastoral Suite for Children* Op 15, the famous collection *Biriulki* Op 28, his collection of duets for beginners, *First Steps* Op 29, *Staccato Preludes* Op 31, and the *Miniatures* Op 33 were first published by Triton, a publishing co-operative active in St Petersburg from 1925 until 1936, of which Maykapar was a founding member.

Samuil Maykapar died on the 8 May, 1938. Vladimir Ashkenazy was ten months old; Tatiana Nikolayeva was 14; Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels were in their early twenties. They – along with Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, and hundreds of others – studied with Russian teachers in what was then the Soviet Union, benefitting from the education system that Maykapar had helped to shape, and which to this day makes Russia a superpower in the musical world.

In 1944, Elizaveta Maykapar was among 1.2 million people to perish during the siege of Leningrad. Sofia survived until 1956, living and teaching in Moscow, where she shared an apartment with her son, Evgeny, his wife, and their son, Maykapar's grandson, Alexander. Born in 1946, he worked as a pianist, harpsichordist, organist, musicologist, writer, and translator. Appointed a professor at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, where he himself had studied, and at the Schnittke Institute of Music in Moscow, he was named an Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation in 1999, and died in 2021. ■

MAYKAPAR
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The Little Orphan, *Biriulki* Op 28 No 2 (Beginner/Intermediate level)

Arietta from *Grande Sonatine* Op 22 (Intermediate)

Pensée fugitive Op 11 No 6 (Intermediate/Advanced)

Maykapar timeline

	Russian Music	The World	Culture
1860			Chekhov born
1862	Anton Rubinstein founds St Petersburg Conservatory		
1865		Abraham Lincoln assassinated	Wagner: Tristan und Isolde
1866	Nikolai Rubinstein founds Moscow Conservatory		Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment
1867	**Maykapar born**		Zola: Thérèse Raquin
1868		Tsar Nicholas II born	Grieg: Piano Concerto
1869			Tolstoy: War and Peace Berlioz dies
1870		Lenin born	
1872	Alexander Scriabin born		
1873	Sergei Rachmaninov born		
1875	Reinhold Glière born		
1878		Stalin born	Tolstoy: Anna Karenina
1880	Nikolai Medtner born		Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov
1881	Mussorgsky dies		
1882	Igor Stravinsky born		
1883			Seurat: Bathers at Asnières
1886		Dr John Pemberton invents Coca-Cola	Liszt dies
1887	Borodin dies		
1889		Adolf Hitler born	Charlie Chaplin born
1891	Prokofiev born		
1893	Maykapar graduates		
1893	Tchaikovsky dies		
1894	Anton Rubinstein dies	Dreyfus affair begins	Debussy: Prélude a l'après-midi d'un faune
1897		Lenin arrested and exiled for sedition	Chekhov: Uncle Vanya
1898			Cezanne: The Bathers
1899			Elgar: Enigma Variations Sibelius: Finlandia Diaghilev, Benoit and Bakst found Mir Iskusstva
1901		Queen Victoria dies, succeeded by Edward VII	
1902			Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande
1903	Vladimir Horowitz born	Ford Motor Company founded	
1906	Dmitri Shostakovich born	San Francisco earthquake	Picasso's Cubist period begins
1908	Rimsky-Korsakov dies		
1910	Balakirev dies	Edward VII dies; succeeded by George V	
1912		RMS Titanic sinks	John Cage born Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé
1913	Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring	Richard Nixon born	
1914		Bosnian Serb student Gavrilo Princip assassinates Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austro-Hungary	
1915	Scriabin dies Sviatoslav Richter born		
1916	Emil Gilels born		
1917		February revolution / October Revolution Tsar Nicholas II and Romanovs executed Lenin becomes first head of Soviet Russia	Holst: The Planets
1918	Rachmaninov leaves Russia Taneyev dies Cui dies	 WWI ends Spanish flu pandemic	Leonard Bernstein born
1924	Tatiana Nikolayeva born	 Lenin dies; Stalin becomes Leader	
1925	Triton publishing co-operative founded	Adolf Hitler writes Mein Kampf	Pierre Boulez born Eisenstein: Battleship Potemkin
1929			Andre Previn born
1935			Woody Allen born
1936		George V dies; succeeded by Edward VIII, then by George VI Spanish Civil War begins	 Steve Reich born
1937		Hindenburg disaster	
1938	**Maykapar dies**	Hitler marches on Austria	Daphne du Maurier: Rebecca

WAYS TO WARM UP

Most teachers advise we do some form of finger workout before starting our 'real' repertoire practice – but do exercises by Hanon, Beringer et al really do the trick? Are there alternatives? **John Evans** turns to three renowned pianists to hear how they like to get in shape

Studies, finger exercises, scales and arpeggios. Whatever you choose to run through, it's generally accepted that using them to warm up before you get stuck into playing repertoire is a GOOD THING. Who doesn't know a pianist with tendon or finger-strain issues through playing with cold, tense and stiff fingers, wrists and arms?

Doubtless keen to avoid the same injuries, a reader of this magazine recently wrote to the editor wishing to broaden their knowledge of the exercise repertoire. 'What do we play for the first five minutes or so when we sit down for our daily practice?', asked the reader, who then continued: 'Some of the warm-ups I've used (besides scales and arpeggios) include rotating through the Hanon exercises, where I will play one of the exercises in a different key each day until I've gone through all twelve keys before moving on to the next; or the various exercises in section one of Beringer's *Daily Technical Studies*. A couple of the Brahms exercises are great warm-ups, too. I'd love to read about what other pianists use for warm-ups.'

Pianist's own panel of teachers and performers have often, and continue to give, advice on beneficial exercises – either within these pages, on *Pianist*'s website or via the multitude of videos hosted by contributor Graham Fitch. But, in order to help out said reader, I wondered what other top pianists and teachers might recommend in the way of warming up. What magical and mysterious methods do they employ?

I did a bit of homework first, and it occurred to me that there are at least two facets to this topic: the technical and the musical. The former is obvious enough and concerned with getting the fingers moving and the muscles relaxed while the latter is, it could be argued, the process whereby we disconnect ourselves from the day's concerns to prepare ourselves for the music we wish to make.

'I've never been one to do scales or exercises. I believe most of that work is contained within the pieces we play'

Gabriela Montero

© JustLife/AdobeStock (main); © Anders Brogaard (Montero); Nabin Maharjan (Beisembayev)

That sounds a little highfalutin but for professional pianists at least, the business of warming up the musical mind must be as important as warming up the fingers.

Those in the know

It's a notion I put first to the Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero, well known for her expressive playing and breath-taking improvisations that suggest a deep connection with music. 'In fact, it encapsulates everything I believe about preparing and warming up,' she says. 'Playing and connecting with an instrument, with the sound I am making and with myself in the musical dimension, is an all-consuming experience. The ears and imagination have to be as much involved and "warmed up" as our physical bodies. I can't separate them!'

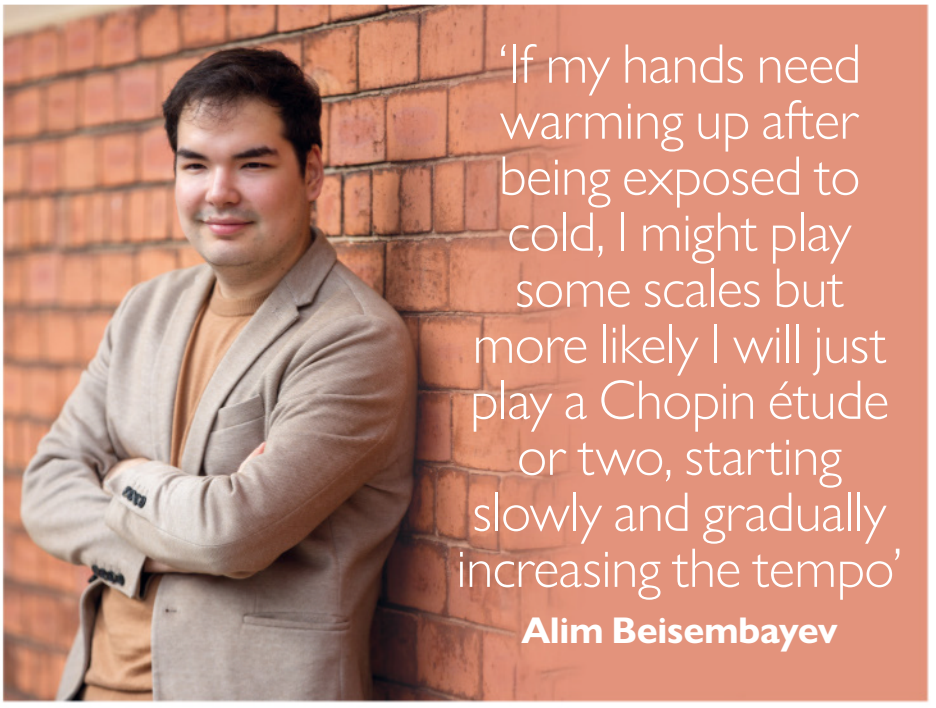
Alim Beisembayev, winner of the 2021 Leeds International Piano Competition, agrees. 'Often I find myself warming up "subconsciously",' he says. 'By this I mean going through passages in my head and hearing them exactly as I think they should go musically. This will sometimes require me to play on my lap or any surface, or even just in the air. It keeps my hands active and fairly warm, too. I suppose it is like mental practice in that it keeps my brain engaged with the music, meaning it is easier for me to be focussed and creative once I am sat at the piano, rather than hazy. I would count this as a musical warm-up!'

Ronan O'Hora, Head of Keyboard Studies and Head of Advanced Performance Studies at

Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London is, likewise, convinced of the value of being mentally warmed up before playing. 'Mental preparation is crucial and this is done away from the instrument,' he says. 'It's not possible to get into the right mental state just by playing. The power of the mind is very great and clearing it of clutter, perhaps through meditation or just stillness and focus is vital. Professional sports people recognise this and their understanding of its benefits is very advanced.'

None of their replies address our reader's principal question, of course. However, as the pianists talked, it became clear that, in truth, they care little for finger exercises and their repetitive nature in particular. 'Fingers have a job to do and ears have a job to do,' explains O'Hora. 'The danger in the rote playing you get with finger exercises is that you begin to divorce what the fingers are doing on the instrument, while the ears and the brain start to shut down. In my view, repetitive finger exercises are like learning multiplication tables by rote – something adults in particular can find very stressful.

'In any case, focussing on exercises that endlessly repeat one action or hand position is the antithesis of playing repertoire where the demands on the pianist are changing constantly. Then, saying to yourself, "Right, I've done my exercises and now I'd like to play" sends a contradictory message to the brain that it finds hard to process. In my opinion, playing the piano has to be all – a musical as well as physical connection with the music and the instrument – or nothing. You can't ask your fingers to listen for you!'



Exercises not for everyone

Hard-hitting stuff, and it doesn't get any better for warm-up exercises when Montero says, 'I find the idea of "warming up" at the piano quite entertaining! I've never been one to do scales or exercises. I believe most of that work is contained within the pieces we play. The first thing I usually do when I touch a piano is play a few thirds to feel my third and fourth fingers, followed by a short scale to hear the quality of the instrument and an improvisation to say "hello" to it. Then I plunge into the repertoire I'm performing. It's really about connecting to the body, the sound and the peculiarities of the many unfamiliar instruments I play each week.'

Only Beisembayev hints at deriving some benefit from traditional warm-up exercises but then only in extremis. 'If my hands need warming up after being exposed to cold, I might play some scales but more likely I will just play a Chopin étude or two, starting slowly and gradually increasing the tempo (Op 10 No 4 is a good one for both right and left hands). It doesn't usually take me longer than five to ten minutes. On a particularly cold day, I might swing my arms around and stretch my fingers in all sorts of directions, without inflicting pain, of course!'

Beisembayev's point about playing a Chopin étude slowly is one also touched on by O'Hora who advises pianists that instead of warming up with exercises they should instead play one of their pieces slowly, giving the brain and muscles time to focus and relax. Indeed, this approach goes to the heart of the pianist's view of warming up.

'You warm up to play but you don't warm up by playing,' he says. 'Fingers can be a bit creaky to begin with but this can be psychological; a symptom of the pressure people put themselves under to play perfectly. For example, play a Chopin étude straight away at full speed and you're putting yourself under too much pressure and asking too much of yourself. Instead, begin your practice by playing a piece slowly, listening and concentrating and so warming up to play.'

HOW TO WARM UP LIKE THE PROFESSIONALS

Assuming your piano room is warm and well ventilated and that your hands, too, are warm, here's how our three pianists recommend you warm up prior to playing

Relax the mind and the body

Don't put yourself under pressure to perform straight away. Instead, clear your mind, focus on the music you're about to play and loosen your arms and shoulders by shaking them gently and rotating the individual joints in turn. Place your hands on the keyboard and repeat the exercise, being careful not to tense and ensuring your joints are still working independently.

Play slowly, focus and listen

Play the piece of music you're preparing slowly, being conscious of the roles your fingers, wrists, forearms and shoulders are playing and the weight that each is contributing. Focus, too, on the sounds you're making.

Play the music virtually

Away from the piano, imagine the music you're about to play, hearing in your head the sounds you wish to make, reproducing the finger patterns and imagining the different weights and pressures you will bring to bear on each note.

Finger exercises

By all means play them, but remember they are for improving command and control of the fingers rather than warming up.

O'Hora says he isn't concerned solely with the fingers at this stage. Instead, how flexible the wrist, forearm and shoulder joints are and how, with their help, we're able to regulate the support and the weight we bring to bear on the keys, mattered more. 'To play a violin involves asking the body to do very specific things, but playing the piano is physically straightforward since we're doing many of the actions that it involves – such as opening a door with just the right amount of effort – every day of our lives,' he says. 'The crucial thing when playing is having an awareness of what part of the body we're using and what's supporting it – the finger alone, the wrist, the forearm, the shoulder. All these joints should be flexible and free to move since stiffness is the biggest enemy.'

A little support goes a long way

For this reason, O'Hora explains that before they play, he suggests his students perform a series of straightforward, rotational movements of their individual joints, making sure that each one moves independently. Next, to ensure they continue to move freely rather than 'locking up' as one unit, he asks them to put their fingers on the keyboard and, playing and holding a chord, repeat the radial movements, checking that each joint has full independence.

'Fingers have a natural strength but are supported by the wrist, the forearm, the shoulder and the body,' he says. 'Doing this exercise before playing is a useful way of reminding ourselves of that sensation. We play the piano with our whole body and it must be constantly available to support the fingers as needed, which is why I stress the suppleness of the body while having an absolute sense of contact with the key.'

Montero echoes O'Hora's comments: 'No part of the body should be isolated,' she adds. 'Everything should be relaxed but stable. It's not only your body that should be attuned to the task but also your mind and ears. You should connect, feel, listen, think. They're all part of the warm-up.'

It sounds like the final nail in the coffin for the traditional warming up routine centred on finger exercises until O'Hora reminds us that pianists of Rachmaninov's generation were devoted to them and would run through them almost automatically before playing repertoire. Doing so didn't seem to hurt their technique and musicality, did it? Clearly not but O'Hora is also keen to ensure we don't confuse working through exercises with warming up. 'Don't mix the two terms together,' he concludes. 'In their purest sense, piano exercises, be they by Hanon, Beringer, Brahms or countless other composers, are more about building a certain kind of control and command of the fingers and the hand. They are not about warming up the mind and the body to play.'

Which just about sums up the position of our three pianists. While they might not have added to our reader's knowledge of the exercise repertoire, hopefully Montero, O'Hora and Beisembayev have inspired them to regard the act of warming up through fresh eyes. ■

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SCHOTT

FANTASTICAL FEAST

As Burkard Schliessmann's latest 3-CD album hits the shelves, the German pianist talks to **John Evans** about the wonders of interpreting and recording Schumann's solo piano music

'Goethe said, "Dreams are the feelings of the imagination." Likewise, to me, fantasy and imagination without feeling are each hollow and dry. Music only comes to life when they are combined.' Time spent in the company of Burkard Schliessmann, is time spent in the company of a philosopher; a pianist perpetually seeking the emotional truth behind music's surface beauty.

In *Robert Schumann: Fantasies*, his latest 3-CD set released on Divine Art Records and dedicated to the composer's piano music, Schliessmann reveals this emotional truth to us by, he says, 'illuminating the inner germ cells of the music in all its expressiveness and explosiveness and bringing it to its limits.' In doing so, the pianist presents some of the composer's most familiar works, among them *Kreisleriana*, *Fantasiestücke*, the C major *Fantasie* and the *Arabeske*, as though freshly minted.

In this, Schliessmann, who has worked with those titans of the Romantic tradition Shura Cherkassky, Bruno Leonardo Gelber and Poldi Mildner (a pupil of Rachmaninov and Schnabel), is assisted by an astonishing instrument: a Steinway Model D provided by Daniel Brech and with a choice of two complete actions, one bright and brilliant, the other warm and dark. As Schliessmann explains, 'Exchanging the keyboards enabled me to record two completely different interpretations of some of the works including the *Arabeske* and 'Des Abends' from the *Fantasiestücke* Op 12. I repeat these works on the second disc. Especially for the second recording of 'Des Abends', which closes it, the choice of the warmer and darker hammers is akin to closing a circle by creating a kind of transition to the darkness of the *Nachtstücke* Op 23, with which the third disc begins and which introduces Schumann's late pieces.'

Schliessmann also chose to record his new 3-CD set at Berlin's renowned Teldex Studios (pictured above) with the expert assistance of producer Julian Schwenkner and engineer Jupp Wegner

who each oversaw the positioning of no less than 14 microphones for a Dolby Atmos experience reproduced in SACD quality. The recording's clarity and richness stands as testament to their work and the quality of the Steinway piano.

'During the recording process I worked as if in a trance,' explains Schliessmann. 'I became one with the great acoustics of the Teldex studio, the unique instrument and in discussions with Julian and comparisons between various editions and original scores, I took Schumann to a special level, presenting to the listeners all his disjointedness, intricacy, vision, eccentricity and, yes, morbidity.'

Schliessmann's ability to reveal and convey a composer's inner world is already well recognised. A recipient of the Goethe-Prize of Frankfurt/Main, a multi-time medal winner of the Global Music Awards and the subject of two critics choice awards in the American Record Guide, Schliessmann is one of the most compelling pianists and artists of the modern era. It is surely no surprise, then, that for his latest 3-CD set, he gives us such remarkable insights into Schumann's music.

The story unfolds

The album opens with *Kreisleriana* Op 16, an eight-movement piece inspired by a satirical novel by ETA Hoffmann. It's a complex and phantasmagoric tale that finds its equal in Schumann's music and Schliessmann's richly coloured and insightful performance. It is followed by the *Fantasie* in C Op 17, which Schumann dedicated to Liszt but which harks back to a freer and more improvisatory conception of sonata form anticipated by Beethoven. Accordingly, Schliessmann brings all his pianistic skills to bear with beautifully judged pedalling, crystal clear articulation and above all, a deep feeling for the music. He allows the work to breathe, exploiting every hiatus and pause to brilliant effect and giving his attention to every detail.

The apparently carefree *Arabeske* Op 18 (it is believed to be a musical letter to Clara, whose father had opposed the pair's marriage) has tripped up many pianists, seduced by its surface attractiveness but blind to its more complex character as expressed in the two intense episodes that punctuate the work. Schliessmann avoids making the same mistake, instead presenting these contrasting episodes powerfully and convincingly. The closing postlude is compelling.

The *Fantasiestücke* Op 12 Books 1 and 2 opens the second CD. So associated are the names of each of its eight pieces with their respective characters that it comes as a surprise to learn that Schumann only added them after he'd completed the music. Even so, no pianist can resist their influence, least of all Schliessmann who completely and utterly falls under their spell.

The *Arabeske* and 'Des Abends', the first piece in *Fantasiestücke*, complete the CD. Yes, we've heard them earlier but not like this, played using the piano's additional set of darker and warmer hammers. What a transformation. It is as if a veil has been passed over the sound, rendering it more softly focused and dream-like, perhaps exactly the quality Schumann sought.

The final disc picks up the theme with *Nachtstücke* Op 23, a work at first sombre and mysterious and which, for all its subsequent lightness, retains that brooding character throughout. Schliessmann is in his element here, especially in the intensely reflective and brooding closing piece. In *Drei Fantasiestücke* Op 111 much of Schumann's complex character with its shifting moods is laid bare in no less than three pieces. Schliessmann says the music represents an emotional rollercoaster between passion, drama and lyricism. It's a ride he relishes taking us on. And so to the closing work, *Gesänge der Frühe*, owing to its complexity a piece rarely performed but to which Schliessmann brings insight and authority.

> 'Performing Schumann's works is one of music's biggest artistic challenges. It requires one to be inspired and influenced by life; by both its ups and its downs'

Follow the composer

Reflecting on his recordings, the pianist says, 'I see my role as interpreter, as being a servant of art. The great composers have written their texts so clearly, that their intention and statement are unmistakable. It is the interpreter's task to honour this fact while bringing their own personality to bear on their performance, without distorting the composer's intentions. When we look at the history of the great performers, we learn that interpreter and composition merge into a great, all-embracing unity.'

That said, in the case of Schumann, Schliessmann admits this pursuit of unity is no easy task. 'Performing Schumann's works is one of music's biggest artistic challenges. It requires one to be inspired and influenced by life; by both its ups and its downs. These experiences inform my initial acquaintance with the music at an improvisatory level but as one begins to study it, one becomes more aware of its internal structures. This may be an intellectual process but a great interpretation succeeds in going back to the improvisation but now in an enlightened and uplifted spirit and state of mind.'

His respect for the score combined with his own responses to the music makes possible a fresh interpretation each time he plays, he says. 'Freedom of interpretation with a regard for the inner sense of the music has its roots in the sense and spirit of Romantic realism.' Which brings us back to where we began. With the pieces on Schliessmann's new 3-CD set, Schumann perfectly expressed that sense and spirit of Romantic realism, an achievement which, in the end, was to have tragic consequences. Was the composer mentally ill? 'Everything in Schumann's work was "planned" at the highest level,' says Schliessmann. 'Hence my personal conviction that Schumann was never "ill" but was always misunderstood.' Thanks to the pianist's new release, perhaps we, too, will also come to understand him. ■

Burkard Schliessmann's three-disc Schumann album, Fantasies, *is available now on the Divine Art label, DDC25753. Further information about Burkard Schliessmann can be found at schliessmann.com, divineartrecords.com and steinway.com/artists/burkard-schliessmann*

Chopin's own 1848 Pleyel grand piano (left); Liszt's upright by Italian maker Carlo Ducci (made between 1873-1886)

COMPOSERS AND THEIR OWN KEYBOARDS

In his book *Chopin's Piano*, Paul Kildea traces the history of one of the composer's keyboards and expands the story to cover, among other things, the development of musical romanticism and Nazi greed for art treasures. But what about other composers' own instruments? Can they also unlock any secrets for us today? **Warwick Thompson** finds out

One occasionally comes across stories based on the successive owners of a single instrument – E. Annie Proulx's novel *Accordion Crimes* or the film *The Red Violin*, for example. (Such anthology-type stories are called 'tales of circulation' if you're interested.) But I can't discover one about a piano. If you can enlighten me, I'd love to hear.

The nearest we have, as far as I can tell, is Paul Kildea's 2019 factual book, *Chopin's Piano*. Kildea, a musician who was for a brief time the artistic director of the Wigmore Hall in London, takes the 'successive owner' idea and applies it to a very specific keyboard. In this case it is a rather substandard Majorcan upright of six-and-a-half octaves, made by a man called Bauza, which Chopin hired for a while in 1838 when he was living in Majorca with George Sand. The instrument's main claim to fame is that he composed some of the 24 Préludes while using it.

It turns out that there isn't terribly much to say about this particular piano for the first 70 years of its life. It remained in Majorca until 1913, when the Polish pianist and harpsichordist Wanda Landowska managed to buy it. She packed it off to her home in Berlin, and the photographs she took there are the only images we now have of it.

The story takes a dark turn when Landowska, a Jew, was forced to flee Germany, and the Nazis gleefully confiscated everything she owned. After the war Landowska, then based in America, had to battle to regain control of her property. The officer in charge of her keyboards, Max Unger, claimed to have been an unwilling participant in the looting, and wrote, 'I am unsure as to what happened to the valuables… hopefully they were well taken care of.'

Kildea is justifiably outraged, and these parts of his narrative are written with cool but blistering anger. 'It was Landowska's first taste of the self-exoneration and shape-shifting of former Nazis that would thwart her attempts at restitution for the remainder of her life – and quite some years beyond it.'

Although less fortunate with some of her other property, Landowska did in fact regain the Bauza piano, and she eventually had it moved to her home in France, about 20km outside Paris. When she died in California in 1959, she left all her French belongings to her devoted housekeeper Elsa Schunicke, but the piano already seems to have mysteriously disappeared from Landowska's collection. And there the trail goes cold. We have no idea where it is now.

Préludes for all

Apart from the drama of the Nazi years, therefore, there's not actually an enormous amount to say. So Kildea expands the text (or 'pads it', if one wants to be snippety) with a biography of George Sand, a description of

All images © Cobbe Collection

Majorca in the 1830s, thoughts on Landowska's relationship with her pupils, Manet's problems in painting a hat (yes, really), and so on. Sometimes these are interesting sidelights, but sometimes they're rather tenuous. It makes one wonder if there really is all that much to say in general about composers' own instruments, and what they can tell us about the works composed on them.

But as this is the core of the book, a little bit of sleight-of-hand is clearly necessary. Since we can never (at least for the foreseeable future) know what this *particular* piano sounds like, Kildea wonders instead what *other* extant pianos of the 1830s and 1840s can tell us about Chopin's style, about the 24 Préludes, and about the development of a Chopin performing tradition which, he suggests, gets further and further from the composer's own intentions as the decades progress.

He states that more restored 1830s/40s Pleyel pianos now exist than ever before. (Pleyel was Chopin's preferred make.) Indeed, a hundred years ago, these old instruments were mostly neglected or sent to the scrap heap. 'They have a sound so fundamentally different from that of a modern concert grand that it is difficult to believe both instruments belong to the same genus,' writes the author. 'Block out the clackety action as loud as a telegraph machine, and listen instead to the intimate silvery colour in the treble…. The soft-edged hammers hit the strings with less vehemence than hammers today… [It] varnishes the whole texture with a radiant film of upper partials.'

It's interesting to note, however, that some of the 24 Préludes had been composed in Paris, on a better piano, before Chopin decamped for Majorca, but Kildea finds no real difference between them and the later ones. 'The Paris Préludes… are, on the whole, no more fleet-footed than those composed on the inferior Bauza piano, no less concentrated in structure and gesture,' he says.

He sees the missing piano therefore not as a key to Chopin's composition, but as symbolic of a more intimate, pre-Steinway performance style. 'Its disappearance is symbolic of a Chopin performance tradition that has vanished alongside it and which thoughtful musicians today attempt to track down.'

Personality within

And here we hit on the fascinating, irresolvable conundrum at the heart of the story. Is there really anything musically authentic, unique, or revelatory in a composer's own piano? Kildea clearly suggests there might be, but without being too doctrinaire about it.

Others appear to be more certain. I found a short, but engrossing YouTube lecture by musicologist Robert Levin, who performs on the piano which Mozart owned in the last decade of his life. He says, 'One cannot separate the masterworks of music from instruments associated with them… The weight of the keys going down, and the repetition [of notes], and the balance of sound bring you very close to the music and make you say Aha! – so *that's* why it's written that way. It's not the kind of thing that you're going to guess if you're playing on the standard instruments that are manufactured today.'

Another very obvious positive aspect about performing on a composer's instrument is the exciting glamour of it. In the same way that medieval pilgrims would flock to gaze at a splinter of scapula or fragment of femur, it would be hard for any of us today to approach one of Beethoven's or Chopin's instruments without being in awe of the personal connection, at least a little. Whether this would translate to anything of musical value is another question, of course.

The accomplished accompanist (and director of the Leeds Lieder festival) Joseph Middleton thinks there is such a value. He has had several opportunities to perform on Britten's Steinway D which can still be found at the composer's former home in Aldeburgh. He says, 'The hallmarks of Britten's own playing – extraordinary transparency, luminous colours – seem woven into this instrument somehow. It encourages one to listen acutely, to react to the score differently, and to try and take the essence of the sound into other performance situations. Hearing what an accent, or a tenuto, or a staccato or pedal marking is like on this particular instrument is of enormous benefit to the performer who is interested in getting to the heart of a piece of music.'

The test of time

So, yes, there really do seem to be many pros to the experience of playing a composer's instrument: but there are several cons (perhaps in all senses of the word) to the situation too.

Mahler's Graf grand piano, circa 1836

The first of them relates to the deterioration of older instruments over time. Are we really now hearing the very same sound, experiencing the very same weighting of keys, which the composer originally experienced? Robert Levin mentions the 'rebuilding and replacement of certain parts' of Mozart's piano, but is sure that it still gives a 'very, very good idea of how the instrument felt to him physically.' But how can he know? Wood rots; metal corrodes; ivory splits. All instruments change. What does restoration really accomplish? Surely there will always be an element of guesswork?

And what if the instrument is a little way beyond repair? In the early 1990s, it was decided to renovate Beethoven's Broadwood piano which was then in the Hungarian National Museum (it had been gifted by Franz Liszt) and send it on a European tour with the pianist Melvyn Tan. Not everyone was impressed. In 1992 the author and curator Michael Latchem wrote this account to the periodical Early Music after hearing Tan's recital at the Konzerthaus, Vienna: 'According to the programme book, the piano had been restored to "perfect and authentic condition", but the tuning was so bad that the recital should have been stopped. The player should have apologized to the audience and asked for the instrument to be tuned. A quick tuning in the interval only made things worse. Some of the most poignant moments were ruined by the rapid beating of single false notes.'

He goes on, with rather dry humour, to note that as Beethoven was completely deaf by the time he received the Broadwood as a gift, and as he was known to play it untuned and with broken strings, 'it made the performance authentic, at least to some extent.'

Perhaps this rather unfortunate experience might have had even greater ramifications than provoking Mr Latchem's amusing irony. I note that Melvyn Tan later abandoned the 'early piano' aspect of his career entirely, and reverted to the modern keyboards he had learned on as a child.

Perhaps he was suffering from PSTD. (Pre-Steinway Traumatic Disorder – boom tish!)

Sound is subjective

To return to Chopin for a moment, you can get an excellent idea of the current sound of some of his pianos if you go to the website of the extraordinary Cobbe Collection, at Hatchlands in Surrey. The collection includes three pianos which Chopin was known to have possessed (it also, impressively, has instruments which belonged to Haydn, Mahler, Bizet, George IV and Marie Antoinette), and their treasure-trove site contains some fascinating performances on these instruments. Kildea's lively description of the early Pleyel sound, which I quoted above, is pretty much confirmed by them.

Whether you actually like it or not depends purely on taste. One person's 'authentic escapement' is another's 'clackety telegraph machine'; *your* 'lovely sustained harmonics' are *my* 'tinny pub piano'. Each to their own. I'm certainly glad such experiments exist, even though if I had to choose, I'd always plump to hear Chopin (and Mozart and Beethoven) played on the great modern makes. There seems so much more that the performer can do; so much more flexibility, variety and range that she or he can offer.

And judging from the comparatively few recordings of composers' pianos (or early pianos in general) on the market, I guess that mine isn't a minority opinion. On the whole, it seems to be a niche interest. Of course, it might be that we've all been conditioned by the mighty Steinway sound to think of it as the 'only' sound, and thus are trapped by our prejudices; but since other 'authentic' instrument performances – Baroque works played by period-instrument orchestras, for example – have easily superseded non-authentic versions in popularity, I don't think the disfavour of the early piano sound can be ascribed purely to mere prejudice.

Chopin's grand piano, by John Broadwood & Sons (1847), chosen by Chopin for his English recitals

Perhaps it's more educational and pleasurable for the performer than the listener. If the experience of playing a composer's piano can offer them something which they then export to other situations (as Joseph Middleton suggests) then we're all gainers.

So what's the verdict?

I've taken the 'Chopin sound' as the starting point of this article because Paul Kildea's comprehensive book is the best on the subject I found. But of course, if we turn to Liszt, the focus changes somewhat, and the idea of 'an authentic sound' is very different. By the end of Liszt's life, the revolutionary Steinway piano, with its cast-iron frame and body shaped from a single piece of wood, had pretty much conquered the world. Liszt was as impressed as anyone. In 1883 he wrote, 'The new Steinway grand is a glorious masterpiece in power, sonority, singing quality and perfect harmonic effects, affording delight even to my old piano-weary fingers.'

So, while we might get excited by the thought of playing one of Liszt's own pianos (and there are still *lots* of them about, and a fair number of recordings of them online), the sound will not be as unfamiliar as that of Chopin's Pleyels, Beethoven's Broadwood, or Mozart's Anton Walter. The pleasure will probably be, as I suggested earlier, in the mere glamour of it.

But here again, there's another possible con: perhaps there's a danger of fetishization. After all the piano is, at bottom, just a mechanism of wood, metal, glue, and felt. The great composers' works, on the other hand, live in the realm of infinite interpretation, and if we want to ignore the limitations of Mozart's keyboard and what it can tell us about tempo or dynamics, then surely that's our right.

All in one

But, still, wouldn't it be fun if the exact key-weight and sound of various keyboards could be incorporated into one digital instrument? If at the flick of a button, you could be playing Chopin's Pleyel Grand No 13819, and then suddenly switch to Beethoven's 1817 Broadwood, and then to Britten's own Steinway?

I've seen a Korg digital keyboard which offers a generic early Pleyel sound (although not differentiated key weighting), but maybe it's time for tens, or even hundreds, of composers' keyboards to be incorporated into one instrument. Wouldn't it have been something if the specifics of Chopin's Bauza piano had been thus captured before it disappeared? What a thought. ■

ALBUM REVIEWS

Reviews by **Peter Quantrill, Dave Jones** and **Warwick Thompson**

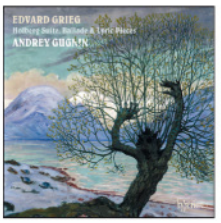
OLIVER TRIENDL

Labor: Piano Concertos for the Left Hand
Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz/Eugene Tzigane
Capriccio C5521
★★★★

Josef Labor (1842-1924) was a Viennese musician, largely remembered as the piano and composition teacher of Alma Schindler (before she married Mahler). The Capriccio label has lately done much to revive his own music, issuing several compelling albums of chamber music in a conservative but distinctively post-Brahmsian style. He wrote these three capriccio-like concertos near the end of his life, commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein after the pianist lost his right arm in the First World War. No 1 builds Romantic pathos through a long variation sequence, recalling Reger in its complex tonality. No less original in form, Nos 2 and 3 set the scene with a brief rhapsody before plunging into a big symphonic battle. Oliver Triendl emerges triumphant against the full forces of the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz under Eugene Tzigane, aided by Capriccio's sympathetic engineering in the studio. **PQ**

ANDREY GUGNIN

Grieg: Lyric Pieces (Books 3 & 7); *Ballade*; *Holberg Suite*
Hyperion CDA68424
★★★★★



Grieg thought with his fingers no less than Beethoven or Chopin, and Gugnin gives us a marvellously thoughtful, pianistic account of the *Holberg Suite* that temporarily renders the orchestral version redundant. He gives it a French accent (especially in the divisions and ornamentations of the Air, taken mesmerisingly slowly) that foreshadows Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*. A comparably sustained quality of half-dreamt speech holds together the G minor Ballade, which under Gugnin's fingers becomes a missing link between Schumann and Scriabin. Rather than the usual assortment of Lyric Pieces, he presents Books 3 and 7 complete, moulding them as songs without words through the most subtle rubato and quicksilver dabs of colour. Even old favourites such as 'To Spring' (Book 3) take on new light. Each Book is taken in a single span, opening playfully and intensifying towards a climax of meditative intensity, almost expressionistically so in the 'Phantoms' of Book 7. **PQ**

KIRILL GERSTEIN

Music in Time of War: Works by Komitas & Debussy
Myrios Classics MYR905
★★★★

Kirill Gerstein's latest project contrasts the music of Debussy and Komitas Vardapet, two musicians whose worlds were both shattered by international conflict. Komitas (1869-1935) was an Armenian musician-priest ('Vardapet' means, roughly, 'Celibate Doctor of Theology'), who based his style on the folk music of his homeland. His shimmering short piano pieces are hauntingly simple, mixing eastern folk elements with minimalist repetitions. Gerstein suggests in a liner note that they convey 'loneliness and fantasy' and his performance, in the Grosser Saal of Vienna's Konzerthaus, conjures extraordinary beauty from these bittersweet qualities. Komitas's songs (with soprano Ruzan Mantashyan) are also lovely in their Phrygian-mode exoticism. Debussy's 12 Etudes and various other pieces form the bulk of the disc and are performed with impressionistic gorgeousness. But it is Komitas – rushed by the Armenian genocide – who makes the greater impact, and who perhaps offers even greater solace in our own time of conflict. **WT**

NIKOLAI LUGANSKY

Wagner: Transcriptions from *The Ring*, *Parsifal* & *Tristan und Isolde*
Harmonia mundi HMM902393
★★★★★

What's Wagner doing in *Pianist*? His solo-piano catalogue is mostly early and ephemeral; Lugansky has boldly gone the other way in a selection of endings from his mature operas, beginning with the Entry to Valhalla from *Das Rheingold*, in his own adaptation of a transcription by Louis Brassin. It's clear that Lugansky knows the original scores from the inside out. Anyone accustomed to hearing the operas live will silently fit the words over the music, and see the stage aglow in the Magic Fire music closing *Die Walküre*. The fundamentally unpianistic nature of Siegfried's Funeral March demands more of an imaginative stretch, but the Transformation Music of *Parsifal* is an uncannily persuasive act of devotion. Liszt's version of the *Tristan* Liebestod becomes the inevitable summit, both of the art of operatic transcription and of Lugansky's recreative gifts for evoking worlds beyond the keyboard. **PQ**

NELSON GOERNER

Liszt: Sonata, Petrarch Sonnets etc
Alpha Classics ALPHA1036
★★★★

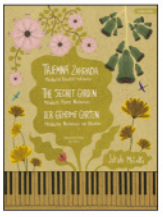
Superb as Nelson Goerner is here, I wonder if equal honour shouldn't be accorded to the producer of this recording. Hugues Deschaux has turned a live performance (Salle Philharmonique de Liège) into something of such rich depth of sound and acoustic presence that one almost feels Goerner is playing on one's own Steinway D, in one's own personal concert hall, for one's very own self. The treble register vibrates as if you're in the front row, the bass blasts your hair back, and the middle notes sing like a luxurious mezzo-soprano. And if anyone in the audience coughed, they were edited out with such Stalinist thoroughness that even that Russian tyrant would have been impressed. All this and lavish, generous performances by Goerner of the B minor Sonata, the *Sonetti di Petrarca*, the *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 6, and other works. Now thunderous, now delicate, now dreamy… it's pure Lisztian heaven. **WT**

BRAD MEHLDAU

Your Mother Should Know – Brad Mehldau plays The Beatles: Includes *I Am The Walrus*; *Here, There, and Everywhere*; *Life on Mars* etc
Nonesuch 7559790740
★★★★

Melhdau has often utilised songs by The Beatles in jazz trio recordings to great effect, resulting in unique jazz-orientated interpretations that reflect the originals, but are delivered in a way that fits with his very distinctive contemporary jazz playing style. Here, he does it in a solo piano context, and adds some touches that are highly suitable when playing without bass and drums – e.g. a busy left hand with a strong boogie woogie style in *I Saw Her Standing There*. It's a live recording from late 2020, so it's taken a while to reach the shelves (arriving last year), but it was worth the wait. It has a precision in the live situation that many pianists would be very happy with in a studio recording. The closing track, *Life on Mars*, is the wild card here, because it was written and recorded by David Bowie, but this is a great album. **DJ**

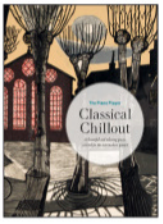
SHEET MUSIC REVIEWS

Reviews by **Michael McMillan**

THE SECRET GARDEN

Jakob Metelka

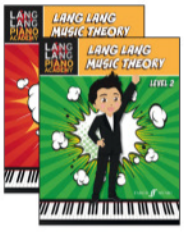
Bärenreiter

Jakob Metelka (b.1986) is a Czech composer, pianist, and teacher with two publications already under his belt from Bärenreiter. Quirky title fonts and three large black-and-white illustrations adds individuality to the overall presentation, and audio recordings of the 15 pieces can be found on YouTube. Although subtitled as 'Modern Piano Nocturnes', not all these Grade 5-7 pieces (such as 'The Storm', or 'The Kobold') reflect the gentle character typically associated with the genre, and the plentiful fingering suggestions hint at some tricky manoeuvrings. Not everyone will find the harmonic twists convincing but the final piece in the book, 'The Secret Garden', hits the sweet spot.



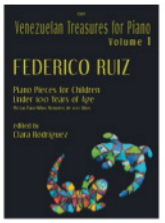
THE PIANO PLAYER: CLASSICAL CHILLOUT

Faber

There are seven volumes now in Faber's *Piano Player* series targeting the intermediate pianist with themed collections of original piano works and arrangements. *Classical Chillout* contains 20 pieces around Grade 3 to 6 level, all in their original form. The selection of music certainly fits the title, although the majority of the pieces have been picked from contemporary composers such as Ola Gjeilo, Ludovico Einaudi, Yiruma, and Max Richter. There's an error in MacDowell's 'To a Wild Rose' (which also appeared in Faber's *Piano Anthology*) but if ambient, atmospheric piano music is to your taste, this is an easy compilation to recommend, with crisp presentation adding to the overall package.

LANG LANG MUSIC THEORY LEVELS 1 & 2

Faber

These 32-page books have been designed to be used alongside the *Lang Lang Piano Method* but are suitable for all children. Beginning with writing letters on a keyboard and colouring in black keys, Book 1 covers crotchets, minims, semibreves, and their corresponding rests, and almost all the notes on the treble and bass clefs. Book 2 introduces dynamics, quavers, basic chords, a couple more notes on the stave, and sharps/flats. Cartoon drawings of Lang Lang and pictures add appeal, although the lack of colour may be a drawback for some children. Young children with less developed reading ability and those who would enjoy using stickers would be better suited to Lina Ng's series of theory books.



VENEZUELAN TREASURES FOR PIANO

Federico Ruiz

Clifton Edition

Following the demise of their previous publishing company (Spartan Press) Pat and Mark Goddard founded Clifton Edition last year, naming their company after the location of their premises. They have rapidly republished some of their old catalogue, reclothing the music with new covers, smartening up the typeface, and widening their physical dimensions by 1.5cm. These two volumes of *Venezuelan Treasures* containing Federico Ruiz's attractive compositions have been edited by Clara Rodriguez, to whom the entirety of Volume 2, and the mysterious Nocturne in Volume 3 is dedicated. Much of the music's flavour and energy is defined by the rhythmic character and the writing lies well under the fingers; difficulty ranges from Grade 6 to 8, and the first volume is suitable for those not yet at this level.

BEETHOVEN

Bagatelles Op 33

Complete Bagatelles

Henle (Op 33)

Bärenreiter (Complete)

Henle's previous edition of the Bagatelles Op 33 (HN20) was published several decades ago. The editorial team of Otto von Irmer and Walther Lampe (fingering) have been replaced by Joanna Cobb Biermann and Rolf Koenen (fingering), and the presentation has been enhanced with their updated engraving recipe. These pieces were written for amateurs, so they represent good choices for Grade 6-8 pianists wanting to play some Beethoven. The hand distributions provided by Koenen in the first Bagatelle are well worth considering, and if the Op 33 is all you want, there's no reason to look any further.

Anyone searching for Beethoven's complete set of Bagatelles should have Bärenreiter's edition high on their shortlist. When the Preface and Critical Commentary run to 17 pages each, you know a publisher is flexing their scholarly muscles, and the absence of any editorial fingering will appeal most strongly to serious pianists who wish to detail their own choreography through the music. Notable inclusions are a couple of additional versions of 'Für Elise' – a draft and proposed revision of the piece, and a completion of the second version by the editor, Mario Aschauer – which offers a fascinating insight into the composer's creative process. Interestingly, only one of the mid-piece page-turns matches Henle's choices in the Op 33 set, but both offer workable options. A top-notch edition, with a price to match.

THE JOY OF GRADED PIANO GRADES 1-5

Yorktown Music Press

Having written a book about how to practise music and then curating excellent collections of music by William Gillock and Naoko Ikeda for the Willis Music Company within the last three years, Andrew Eales shows no signs of slowing down. These five books contain 24 pieces each, selected and edited by Eales for Yorktown Music Press, continuing the *Joy Of* series started by the late Denes Agay in the 1950s. The size of the musical text in the first four books is relatively large and more spaced out than normal, making the music appear more welcoming and less intimidating for pianists at this level. A few sentences at the beginning of each piece introduce the composer and provide performance notes, and useful editorial fingering has been added. The first half of each book features composers from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods (e.g. Bach, Clementi, Burgmüller), whilst the latter half is devoted to modern and contemporary music (e.g. Bartók, Mompou, Einaudi).

A significant amount of the music appears to have been harvested from the ABRSM's exam syllabuses but choices are judicious and there are plenty of other pieces that provide a wide variety of styles and character suitable for children, teens, and adults. Attractively presented from cover to cover, these are among the best graded collections currently available.

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

Mozart
Piano Concertos, Vol. 9

'Bavouzet, who plays Mozart's own cadenzas, hints at a period style of pianism, which sounds crisp (but never acidic)... There's not a lot of opportunity for drama within this triptych: instead, there are rainbow-producing sunny showers, evoked by Bavouzet and friends with an easy elegance.'
BBC Music Magazine

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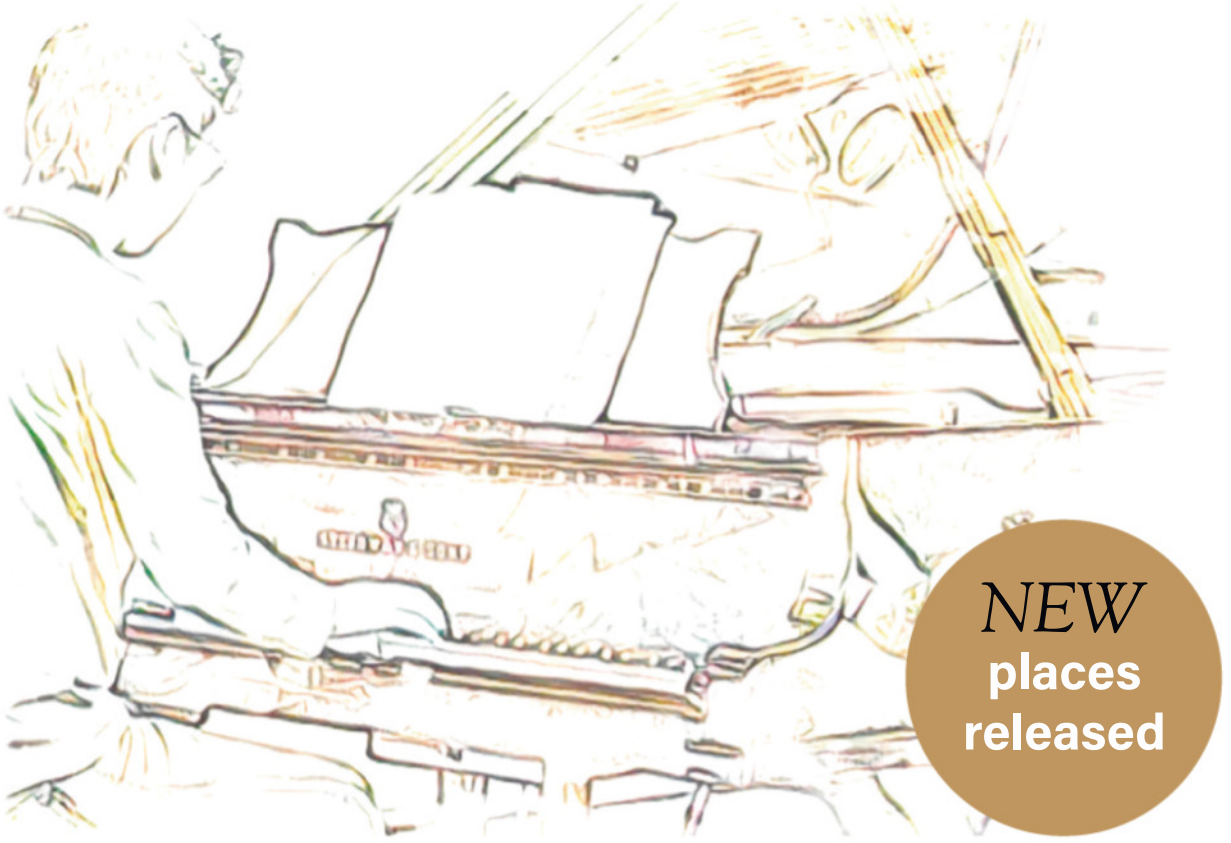

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Pianist

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)
Gavotte in C HWV578

BEGINNER

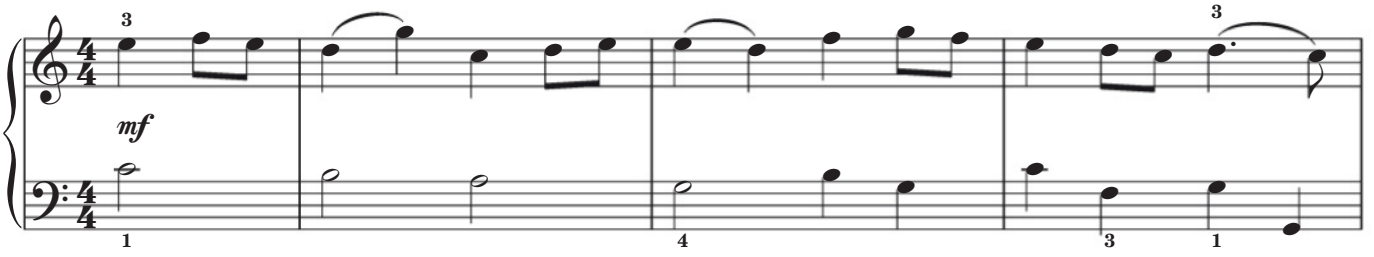
This is the final movement of a sonata compiled by Handel around 1750, perhaps for a musical clock; he wrote the original music for an orchestral ensemble. *Playing tips*: The RH much takes the lead in this sunny but gentle dance. Start off with a firm *mezzo-forte* and pay close attention to the dynamic and phrase markings. Our pianist Chenyin Li adds some lovely embellishments here and there. They're not obligarory but they fit within the Baroque style: try imitating them or embellishing the line for yourself if you feel brave! **Look closely at the technical tips within the score.**

The key is C major: no sharps or flats.

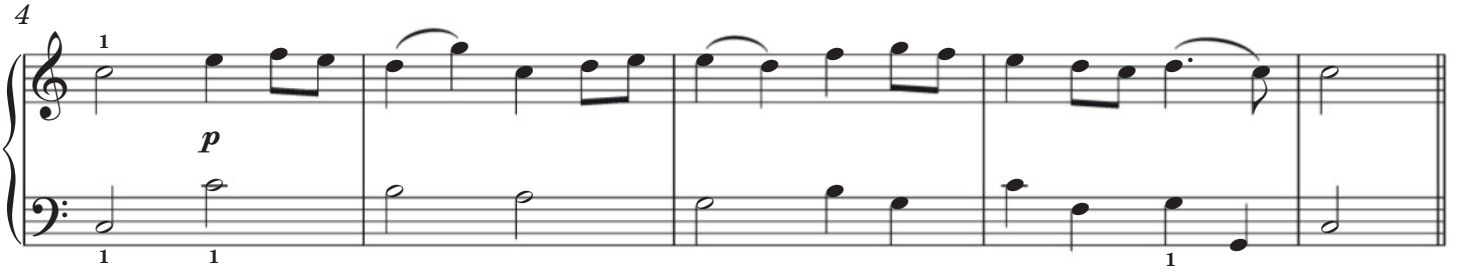
Enjoy a leisurely Andante pace, but start your practice more slowly and with hands separately.

Notice the slur markings in the RH. Play the first note with a small emphasis and the second more lightly. Make a slight 'down-up' motion of the hand.

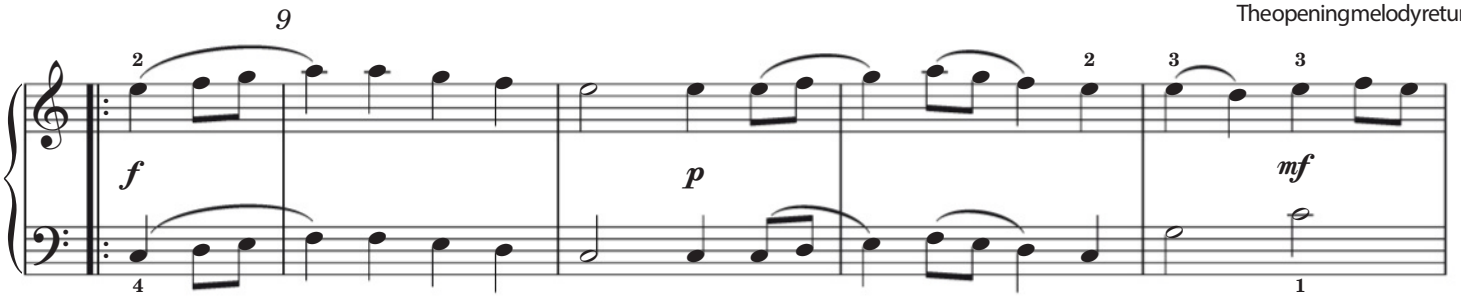
Andante ♩ = 50



The first four LH minims should be played legato (joined). This is quite easy to do if you follow the fingerings. Keep your fingers close to the keys.

Play the crotchets with a more detached articulation, lifting the finger off the key before playing the following note. Prepare the LH octave leap from G down to G at the end of bar 3.

The first four bars are repeated, now markedly softer.

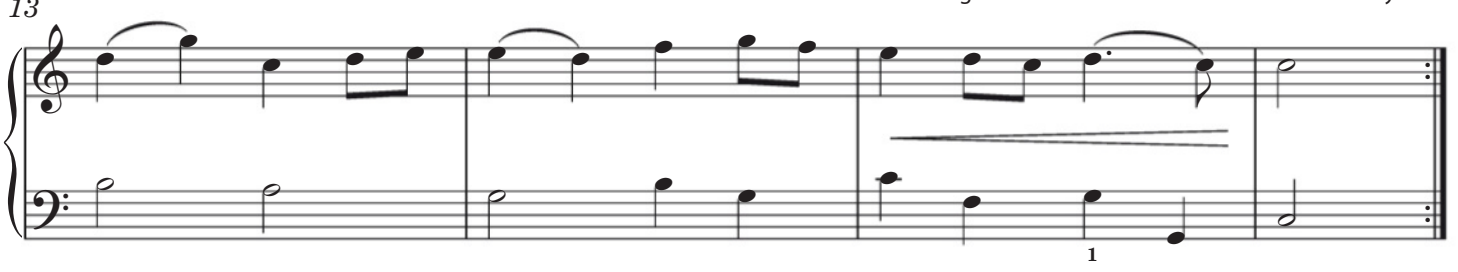
Keep the crotchets detached again.



The opening melody returns.

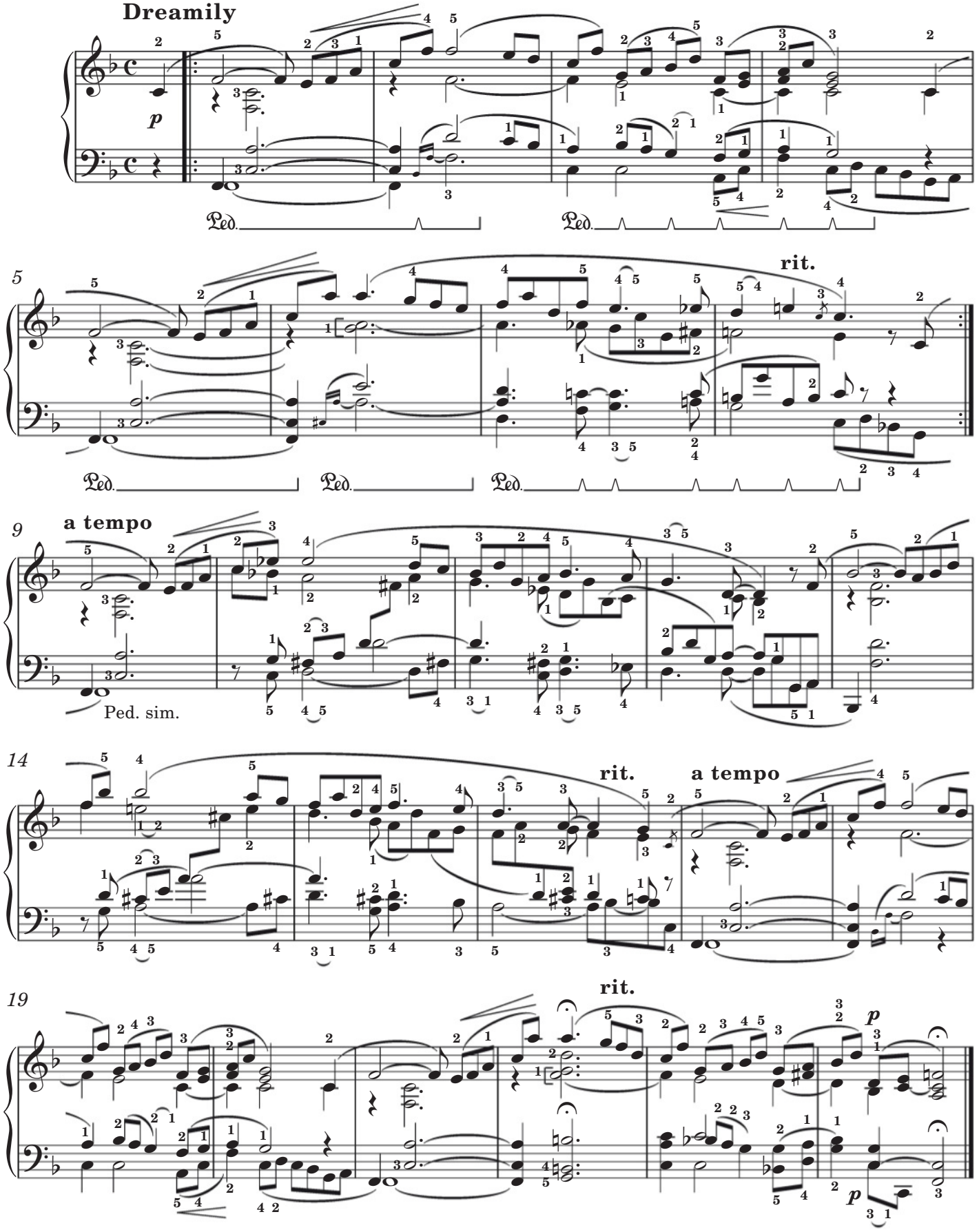
Both hands to be completely in sync here. The first bar should be played legato, and the second bar detached.

Make another marked contrast in dynamic from phrase to phrase.

Make a crescendo through the last bar to the end. In the final bar, hold the minims for their full length and then raise the hands simultaneously.

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Träumerei, No 7 from *Kinderszenen* Op 15

INTERMEDIATE

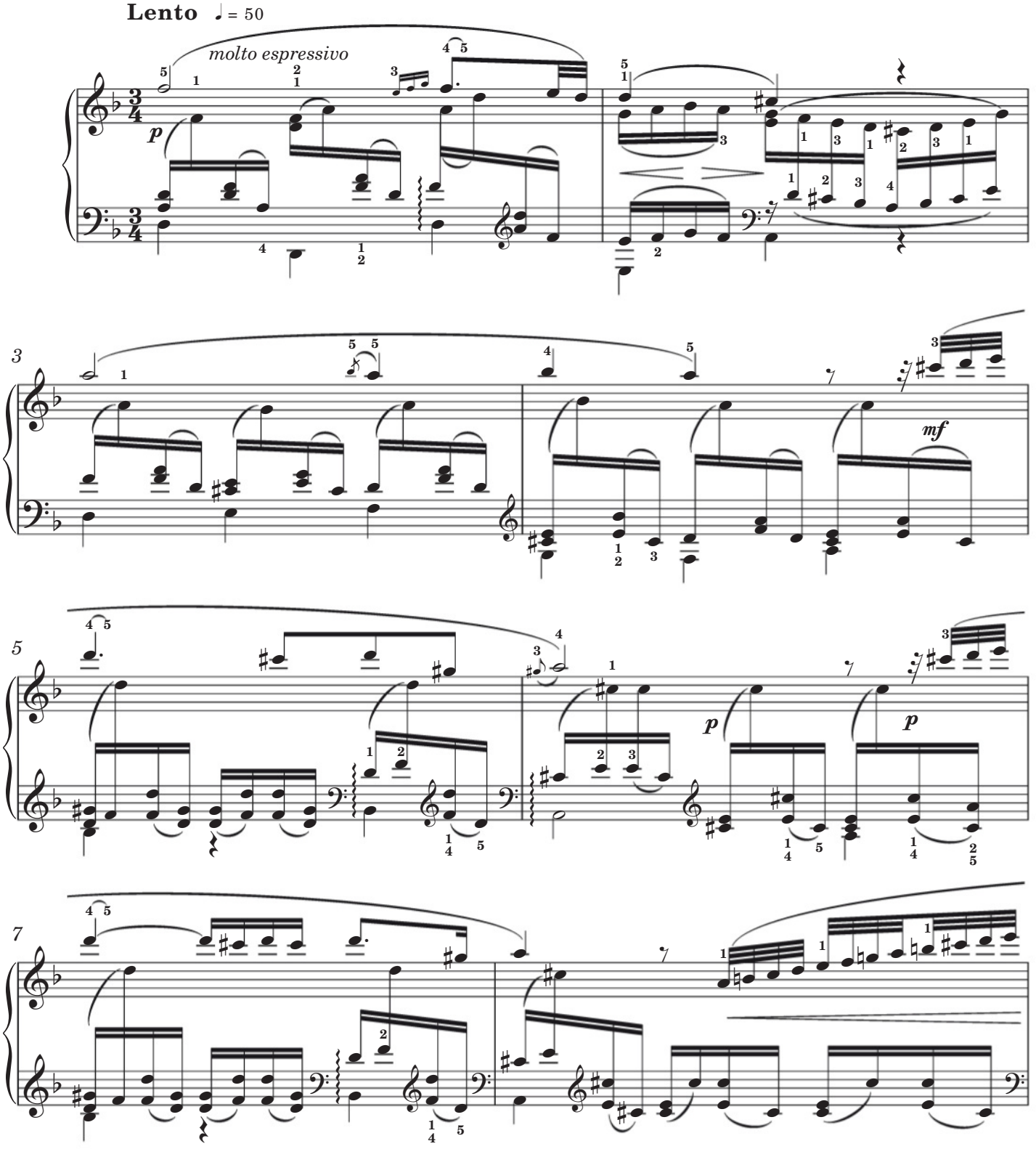
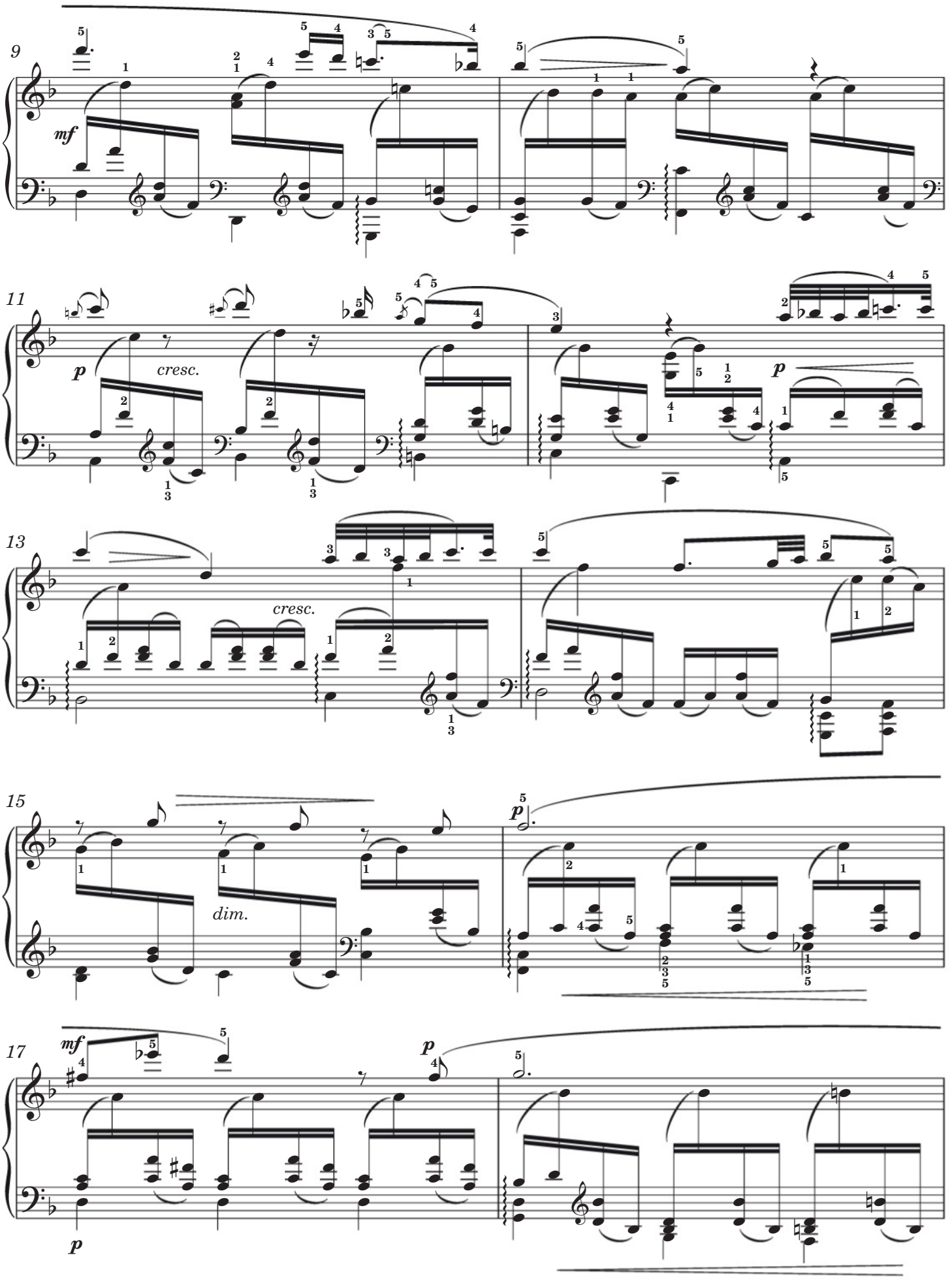
In the early days of cinema, 'Träumerei' was so frequently deployed for its reliably tearjerking appeal as incidental music that one film critic was already reflecting, in 1910: 'We might call Schumann's "Träumerei" a number with a positive pathetic appeal, and use it at all times when screen action is of a pathetic character, [but] could we hope that the audience would enjoy its third or fourth repetition in one hour?'

Giovanni SGAMBATI (1841-1914)

Mélodie de Gluck

ADVANCED

The editor of *Pianist* has been waiting to put this spellbinding piece in the magazine for many years. There is a historic recording by Rachmaninov, which is worth seeking out (on YouTube) even if the pianist's unsentimental style is presently out of fashion. In Jascha Heifetz's playing of the violin-piano transcription can also be heard a noble and unmannered melodic restraint. There's a more recent recording by Evgeny Kissin, who often plays it as an encore. two-stave option featured here.

Playing tips: Chenyin Li, who plays this work exquisitely on the soundtrack, tells us that the hardest technical challenge for her was to catch the LH bass notes with the pedal, especially in the wide chord stretches which need to be arpeggiated.

Pedal tips: Ample pedal can be used, changing when the harmonies change. For a piece of this advanced nature, subtle pedalling will always be required, such as half-pedalling and flutter pedalling.

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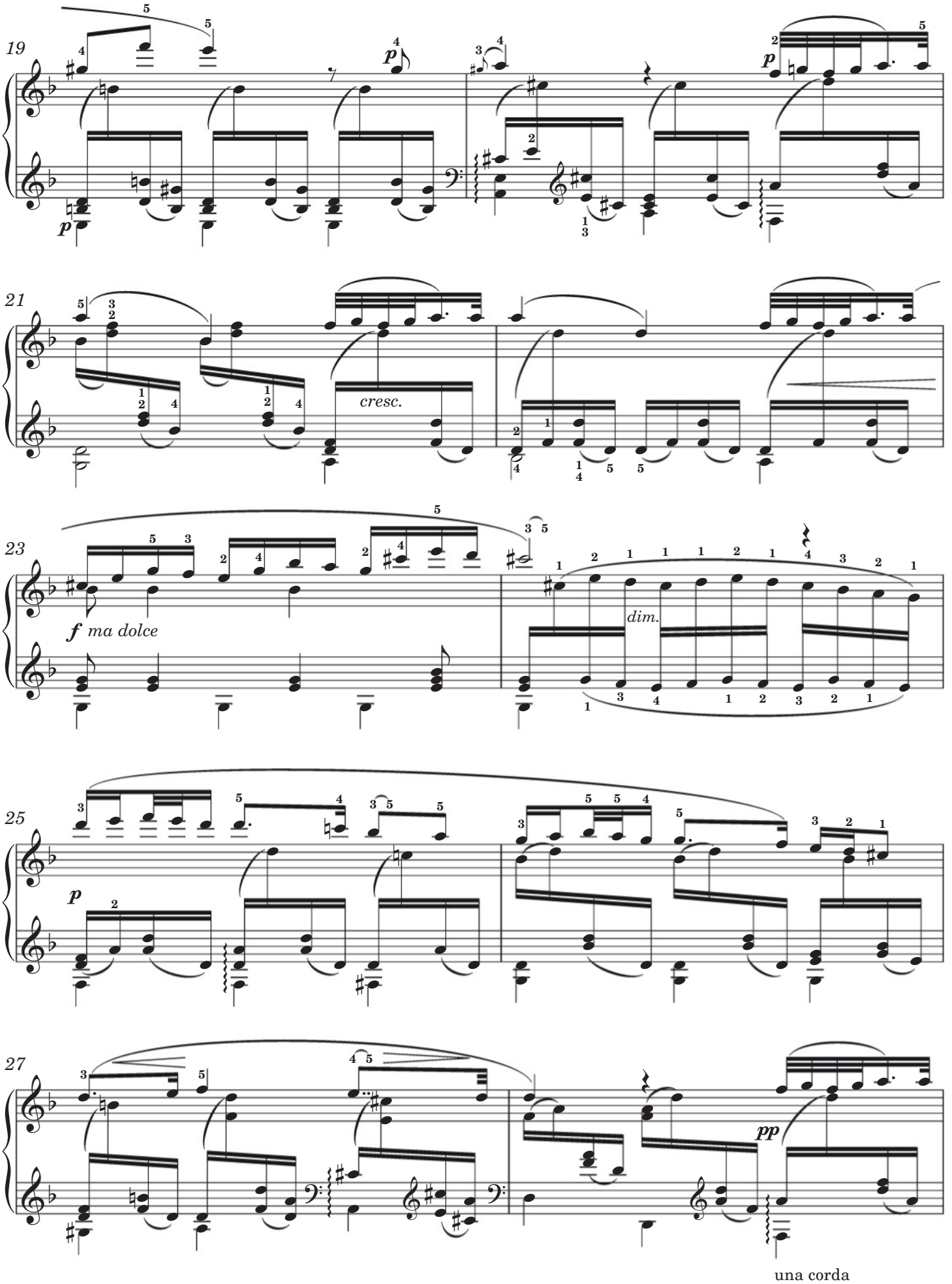
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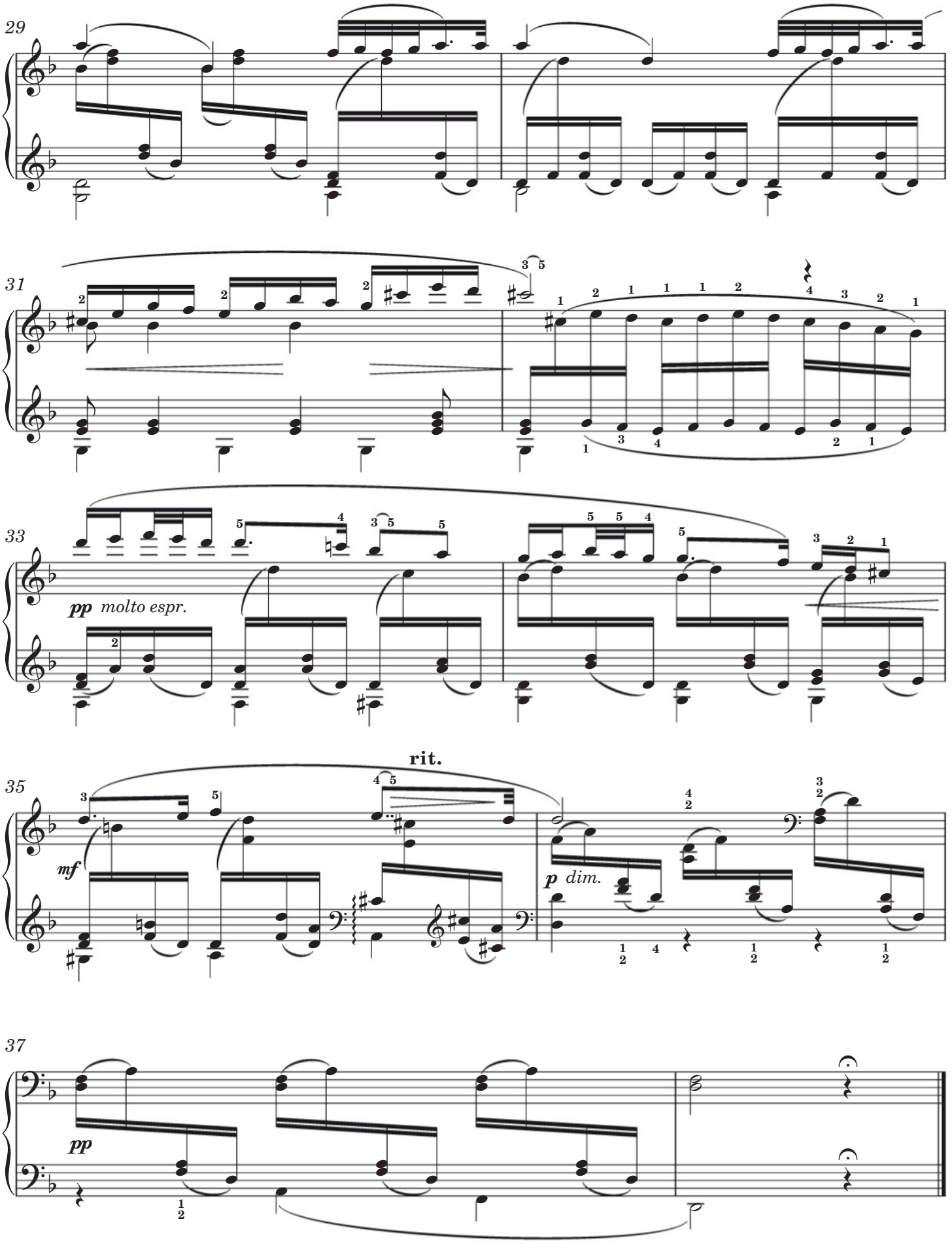
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